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FOR ACTING
FROM
GREAT NOVELISTS

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LONDON
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & SONS, LTD.

SCENES FOR ACTING
FROM
GREAT NOVELISTS

BY

GUY PERTWEE

AUTHOR OF

"SCENES FROM DICKENS FOR AMATEUR ACTING," ETC.



LONDON
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & SONS, LTD.
BROADWAY HOUSE, 68-74 CARTER LANE, E.C.

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PREFACE

THE gratifying reception accorded to "Scenes from Dickens for Amateur Acting" has encouraged me in the belief that a book on similar lines to "Scenes from Great Novelists" will find equal favour among Amateur Actors, for whom these short plays have been especially adapted and arranged.

There is no fee whatsoever for the private representation of any of the Scenes, and for permission for public performance address—

Messrs GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & SONS, LTD.,
BROADWAY HOUSE,
68-74, CARTER LANE, E.C.

GUY PERTWEE.

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THE QUEEN'S NECKLACE

ALEXANDER DUMAS (*Three Musketeers*)

CHARACTERS.

ANNE OF AUSTRIA . . . Queen of France and wife of Louis XIII.

She is a tall, very beautiful woman with a commanding presence, and is about twenty-six years of age.

GEORGE VILLIERS Duke of Buckingham.

Also tall and extremely handsome, and is very sumptuously dressed. He is some thirty-five years of age.

PERIOD 1625.

SCENE.—*A room in the Queen's apartments at the Louvre.*

The room is small and hung with tapestries. At the back there is a heavily curtained door and a small cabinet. About the stage are several chairs, and in one corner is a prie-dieu. The DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM is discovered standing before a long glass R.

Enter ANNE OF AUSTRIA. BUCKINGHAM sees her reflection and turns.

BUCKINGHAM. Madame! (He drops upon one knee and presses the hem of her robe to his lips.)

ANNE. Duke, you already know it was not I who wrote you the letter that has brought you here?

BUCKINGHAM. Yes, yes, madame. I know now I

was a madman to suppose the snow would become animated or the marble warm. But when one is in love one easily believes in love. And since I see you, I have not lost everything by this journey.

ANNE. Yes, but you know why I see you, milord ? I see you out of pity for yourself. I see you, because insensible to my suffering and your own danger, you persist in remaining in a city, where every moment by remaining you run the risk of losing your own life and endangering my honour. I see you that I may tell you everything separates us—the sea, the enmity of two kingdoms, and the sanctity of oaths. It is sacrilege to struggle against so many things. I tell you we must never meet again. That is why I see you.

BUCKINGHAM. Madame, the sweetness of your voice conceals the harshness of your words. You talk of sacrilege. But the sacrilege is in the separation of hearts that love one another.

ANNE. Milord, you forget I have never said I loved you.

BUCKINGHAM. Neither, madame, have you told me you do not ; indeed, to speak such words would be a too deep ingratitude. For where could you find a love to equal mine ? A love that neither time, nor absence, nor despair can extinguish ; a love that is contented with a passing word or a stray look. It is three years since I saw you first, madame, and for three years I have loved you thus. Shall I tell you how you were dressed when I first saw you ? I see you still. You wore a robe of emerald satin broidered with gold, hanging sleeves upon those lovely arms, fastened with diamonds. Madame, I have but to close my eyes and I see you as you were then ; I open them and I see you as you are now—a hundred times more lovely.

ANNE. What folly to cherish such remembrances.

BUCKINGHAM. What have I else to live for ? There is nothing left but remembrances. They are my happiness, my hopes, my all. Each time I see you is another diamond enshrined in my heart. Madame, do you remember our last meeting in the gardens of Amiens ?

ANNE. Hush, milord, do not speak of that evening.

BUCKINGHAM. And wherefore not, madame, for was it not the happiest night of all my life ? Do you not remember the soft and perfumed air ? Have you forgotten that blue, star-studded sky ? Madame, I can never forget that night of nights, for then for an all too short moment I was alone with you. You poured out your heart to me, you told me of the isolation of your life and of your grief. You leaned upon my arm, and as I bent my head I felt your lovely hair touch my cheek. My Queen, my Queen, all the joys of paradise were centred in that one moment, for I swear that then you loved me.

ANNE. No, no, milord, no more. It was the influence of the place, the charm of the gardens, the ardour in your voice, the thousand circumstances that sometimes unite to destroy a woman. And remember, Duke, you saw the queen come to the aid of the yielding woman, and at the first word of love you presumed to utter I summoned my attendants.

BUCKINGHAM. Yes, yes, it is true ; any other love but mine would have withered and died—but my love came out more ardent and more everlasting. You thought you could fly me by returning to Paris, believing I would never dare to follow you. But, madame, I did, and risked my very life to see you again for a second.

ANNE. Yes, Duke, and how I have suffered because of your mad love for me! Calumny seized upon all those follies in which, as you know, I had no part. The King's anger, fed by the Cardinal, made my life a hell on earth. My dearest friends one by one were taken from me, and strangers, spies of his Eminence, put in their place. Even Madame de Chevreuse was driven into exile, and when you wished to return to France as Ambassador the King himself forbade it.

BUCKINGHAM. Yes, madame, and France is about to pay for her King's presumption with a war. Although, my Queen, I am not allowed to see you, you shall daily hear tell of me. That is my object in projecting the expedition to Rè and to help the Protestants of La Rochelle. Then, madame, it will mean my seeing you again. Oh, I know well enough I have no hope of penetrating to Paris, sword in hand; but when this war is spent a negotiator for peace will be required, and, madame, I, I shall be that negotiator. Neither King, nor Cardinal, nor France herself will dare to say nay to me. And then, my Queen, we shall meet again. Thousands of men will have to pay for that meeting with their lives, but what is that to me so that I see you again?

ANNE. Milord, milord, your passion makes you mad. All these proofs of the love you boast of are little better than crimes.

BUCKINGHAM. Ah, madame, if you loved me as I love you, you could not say that to me. Madame de Chevreuse, of whom you spoke a moment since, was less cruel than you. Holland loved her, and she responded to his love.

ANNE. Madame de Chevreuse was not a queen.

BUCKINGHAM. Then, madame, you would love me were you not one. Your words give me new life, for now I know 'tis but the dignity of your rank that makes you cruel to me. If you had been other than Queen of France you would have loved—poor Buckingham might have hoped. Oh, my beautiful Queen, I thank you a thousand times for those kind words.

ANNE. Oh, hush, hush, milord. You have but ill understood me.

BUCKINGHAM. Then, madame, I beg you, if I am happy in an error, not to deprive me of the joy of it. You said just now you did not write the letter that brought me here.

ANNE. No, no; you know I never wrote it.

BUCKINGHAM. Maybe I have been drawn into a snare, and perhaps shall leave my life in it. Although it may sound strange, I have a presentiment that I shall shortly die.

ANNE. Oh, my God!

BUCKINGHAM. Ah, madame, I do not tell you this to terrify you, for, believe me, I do not heed dreams or presentiments. But the words you have spoken to me, the hope you have inspired, will have richly repaid me even for my life itself.

ANNE. Oh! but I, too, Duke, have had dreams. I dreamt I saw you lying bleeding and wounded.

BUCKINGHAM. In the left side, was it not, with a knife?

ANNE. Yes, milord, it was in the left side and with a knife. Who can possibly have told you I had such a dream? I have imparted to no one but my God, and that in my prayers.

BUCKINGHAM. My Queen, it is enough. I ask for no more. I know now that you love me.

ANNE. I love you! I!

BUCKINGHAM. Yes! Yes! If you did not, would God send the same dreams to you as to me? (*She covers her face with her hands and weeps.*) Ah, madame, we have the same presentiments because our hearts are united. Yes, you love and weep for me.

ANNE. Oh, my God! this is more than I can bear. In Heaven's name, Duke, leave me! I cannot tell whether I love you or not. Oh, take pity on me and go. If you are struck down in France, if I could imagine your love of me were the cause of your death, I should go mad. Go, go then, I implore you!

BUCKINGHAM. How beautiful you are thus!

ANNE. Go, go! Come back hereafter as Minister, as Ambassador; come back surrounded with guards to defend and watch over you. And then I shall not be in fear for your life, and shall be happy in seeing you.

BUCKINGHAM. Is this true, madame; oh, is this true?

ANNE. Yes.

BUCKINGHAM. Then give me some pledge of your affection, some object that will assure that this meeting of ours is real and not a dream. A ring, a chain—something you have worn and that I may wear.

ANNE. Will you go, then, if I give you what you ask for?

BUCKINGHAM. Yes.

ANNE. At once?

BUCKINGHAM. Yes.

ANNE. You will leave France and return to England?

BUCKINGHAM. I will, madame; I swear it, upon my honour.

(ANNE goes to a small cabinet, opens it, and takes out a casket, which she hands to BUCKINGHAM.)

ANNE. Here, milord, are twelve diamond studs.
Keep them in memory of me.

(BUCKINGHAM *takes the casket, and, falling upon his knees, seizes the Queen's hand.*)

ANNE. Go, go, you gave me your word.

BUCKINGHAM. Ay, madame, and I will keep it. Let me but kiss your hand, and I am gone. (*He imprints a passionate kiss upon her hand, and, rising to his feet, takes up his hat and cloak which lie upon a chair.*) Six months hence, madame, if I am not dead, I shall be by your side again, even though I have to overturn the world to do so. My Queen, farewell.

(*He disappears through the curtained doorway. ANNE looks after him for a moment, and then falls, passionately weeping, upon the prie-dieu.*)

CURTAIN.

les - W. Robins or J. Blackwood
h - Nancy - or Wilcox or Clarkson -
tagnan - R. Blackwood or Ada Urne
y - Little Vera in Leaton. Marian?
Partington.

A KINGDOM AT STAKE

ALEXANDER DUMAS (*Twenty Years After*)

CHARACTERS.

KING CHARLES II., tall and of swarthy complexion. His long black hair falls in heavy ringlets over his shoulders. He is plainly dressed, and is about thirty years of age.

D'ARTAGNAN, a tall, rugged, weatherbeaten, soldierly-looking man of some fifty years of age.

GENERAL MONK, a thick-set, burly man. About fifty-two years old.

PARRY, Charles's body-servant. A frail, white-haired man of about sixty years of age.

Four fishermen.

TIME . . . April 1660.

SCENE.—The interior of a cottage upon the coast of Holland. It is a rough place, and very plainly furnished. A table stands O., and a few chairs are scattered about the cobbled floor. At back of stage L. is a door and at back C. an alcove, in which is the window, through which, when open, the moonlit sea is plainly visible. At present, however, it is closed. On the R. of window is a short flight of stairs, which leads to the door of an inner chamber. A wood fire is burning in a large open fireplace L. The time is an April evening in the year 1660. When

the curtain rises PARRY is discovered dozing before the fire. Footsteps are heard outside, followed by a loud knock upon the outer door. This is repeated after a moment's pause.

PARRY (*starting up*). Who is there? What is it you want?

D'ARTAGNAN (*outside*). I want his Majesty, King Charles II. of England.

PARRY. What do you want with him?

D'ARTAGNAN (*impatiently*). Mordieu! you talk too much. I like not talking through closed doors.

PARRY (*taking up a candlestick and crossing to door*). Do you bring news?

D'ARTAGNAN. Ay, and news you little expect. Open, I say, open.

PARRY. Monsieur, I cannot open till I know, until I know your name.

D'ARTAGNAN. Well, then, I am the Chevalier D'Artagnan.

PARRY (*joyfully*). Monsieur D'Artagnan! (*He unbars and opens the door and holds up the candle to D'ARTAGNAN's face.*) Why did you not tell me before, monsieur? Enter, I pray you.

Enter D'ARTAGNAN.

D'ARTAGNAN. Why, it is the good Parry.

PARRY. Indeed it is, and very much at your service, monsieur.

D'ARTAGNAN. Good. Then hasten to inform the King that I would beg speech with him.

PARRY. But, monsieur, the King is asleep.

D'ARTAGNAN. Mordieu! then wake him up. Oh, I'll promise he'll not scold you when he hears my news.

PARRY. On whose business do you come, monsieur ?
D'ARTAGNAN. On my own and your country's.
And now go quick. The King, I want the King.

(*The door at the top of the stairway opens, and CHARLES appears, holding a lighted candle in his hand.*)

CHARLES. Who is it that wants the King ?

D'ARTAGNAN (*dropping upon one knee*). Sire, it is I.

(CHARLES *descends the stair and examines D'ARTAGNAN'S face by the light of his candle.*)

CHARLES. Your face seems familiar. We have met before.

D'ARTAGNAN. Yes, sire. Does your Majesty not recall that night at Blois in the antechamber of my master, King Louis ?

CHARLES. Why, to be sure. I recall you now. You did me good service that night, Monsieur D'Artagnan. But, odd's fish, man, rise, I beg you. Here we are not used to so much ceremony. (*Bitterly.*) Remember I am but a make-believe king—a beggar, and well-nigh friendless.

PARRY. O sire.

CHARLES (*kindly*). Nay, my good Parry, I meant it not. I can never be quite alone while you remain faithful. (*To D'ARTAGNAN.*) Well, monsieur, what would you of me ?

D'ARTAGNAN. Sire, I bring you tidings from England.

CHARLES (*eagerly*). From England.

D'ARTAGNAN. Ay, sire. Surely your Majesty must have heard that the country is in a ferment, and that the people clamour for your return.

CHARLES (*sadly*). But what can I do without an army—without money ?

D'ARTAGNAN (*in a tone of perfect confidence*). Sire, I bring you both.

CHARLES. What are you saying, man?

D'ARTAGNAN. May I crave for private speech with your Majesty?

CHARLES (*sternly*). Monsieur, have I your word this is not some ill-timed jest?

D'ARTAGNAN (*bowing*). Your Majesty shall judge of that.

CHARLES. Very well. Leave us, Parry.

Exit PARRY into inner chamber.

CHARLES (*seating himself at table*). Be seated.

D'ARTAGNAN (*sitting on other side of table*). Thank you, sire.

CHARLES. Now, monsieur.

D'ARTAGNAN. Sire, you must know that some twelve years ago I was able to render some slight service to your Majesty's unhappy father.

CHARLES. To my father. Go on.

D'ARTAGNAN. On the day he—died—I had the honour of speaking to him; indeed, I believe, sire, I was the last to hold private converse with him before the blow fell. His Majesty then laid a solemn trust upon me. He told me that the night before he quitted the city of Newcastle, when his cause was all but lost, he buried a million pounds in gold—the last he had—in the vaults of the castle.

CHARLES. A million pounds!

D'ARTAGNAN. Sire, his Majesty bade me remember that I, alone of all men, knew of the existence of that money, and that I was not to employ it till I deemed that the time had come when it would be of most service to his eldest son. Sire, that time has now come.

CHARLES (*with deep emotion vibrating in his voice*). Monsieur, you have given me fresh life. (*He rises and walks up and down the room*).

D'ARTAGNAN (*also rising*). The King's last word—"Remember"—was intended for me. You see, sire, I have remembered.

CHARLES. Monsieur, you come to me as a messenger of hope from my dead father. If ever I do come to my own again, rest assured I shall not forget you. But now—how am I to get this money? General Monk himself is encamped at Newcastle.

D'ARTAGNAN. I have thought of that, sire. It is true, is it not, that the one man who stands between your Majesty and the English throne is this General Monk?

CHARLES. Yes. He holds the army in the hollow of his hand, and he who rules the army rules England. But to what purpose are these questions, monsieur?

D'ARTAGNAN. Pardon my want of etiquette, sire, but I have heard it said that your Majesty believes that if you could see this man, meet him face to face and confer with him, you would triumph, either by force or persuasion, over the only serious obstacle that lies between you and Whitehall.

CHARLES. Yes, monsieur, it is true. My glory or my obscurity depend upon that man.

D'ARTAGNAN. That is well, sire.

CHARLES. How well?

D'ARTAGNAN. Why, sire, if this General Monk is as troublesome as he seems to be, surely it is expedient that you make an ally of him—or get rid of him.

CHARLES (*pacing up and down*). If I could but see him! If I could but see him!

D'ARTAGNAN. Sire, you shall.

CHARLES. What do you mean ?

D'ARTAGNAN (*imperturbably*). I mean, sire, that your Majesty and the General shall meet face to face this very night—that is, if your Majesty so wills it.

CHARLES (*seizing D'ARTAGNAN by the shoulder and speaking with intense earnestness*). Do you mean that he is here ?

D'ARTAGNAN. I do, sire.

(*He goes to the window at back and pushes it open, displaying the shore and the moonlit sea. The twinkling lights of a ship at anchor a little way out from shore are plainly visible. The sound of waves, breaking gently upon the beach, drifts in through the open casement.*)

D'ARTAGNAN. He is down yonder on the coast, guarded by four of your Majesty's subjects—simple fishermen, but loyal to the death, although they do not know their King is so near. I await but your Majesty's word to give the signal that will bring the General here.

CHARLES. But how, in the name of Heaven, man, have you, a simple French soldier, contrived to inveigle the most powerful man in England into such an undertaking ?

D'ARTAGNAN (*with an air of sublime self-confidence*). 'Twas easy enough. I went yonder to Newcastle to spy out how best to obtain your Majesty's million, only to find the General and the English army encamped upon the very spot where it lies buried. I then bethought me that it might serve your Majesty's purpose to have the man as well as the million, so, sire, I bring him to you.

CHARLES. You bring him to me !

D'ARTAGNAN (*with a grim little laugh*). Yes, sire. The worthy General does not come as a willing visitor

to your Majesty. I bring him in a large chest, pierced with holes to let the air in. He's in it now.

CHARLES. Good God!

D'ARTAGNAN. Oh, don't be uneasy, sire, he is perfectly safe. I have seen to that. And now—will your Majesty be pleased to give audience to the General or to have him thrown into the sea?

CHARLES. Monsieur, are you insulting me with some unworthy pleasantry?

D'ARTAGNAN. You shall see, sire.

(He goes to the window and gives a long, low whistle, and then stands in a listening attitude. Almost immediately an answering whistle is heard from the direction of the shore. He then turns and faces the King.)

D'ARTAGNAN. You hear that, sire?

(CHARLES nods.)

D'ARTAGNAN. In two minutes he will be here.

CHARLES (regarding D'ARTAGNAN wonderingly). Odd's fish, what a man!

D'ARTAGNAN. Is it your wish, sire, that I leave you?

CHARLES. No, no, remain. 'Fore God, man, I can hardly realise yet the full import of what you have done.

(He walks up and down the room, his hands tightly clasped behind his back. The tramp of feet is heard without.)

CHARLES. Open the door, monsieur. (He steps back into the shadow of the staircase.)

D'ARTAGNAN (throwing open the door). This way, friends.

Enter four men with drawn swords. Between them, his hands bound, walks GENERAL MONK. They halt in the centre of the stage.

D'ARTAGNAN. Now, messieurs, you may leave your prisoner. Return to the shore. Await me, but remain within call.

Exeunt the four men.

(GENERAL MONK is left standing perfectly motionless

C. As the door closes CHARLES steps forward into the light. MONK looks at him steadfastly from under his lowering brows, but shows no sign of recognition.)

D'ARTAGNAN. Monsieur Monk, you are in the presence of your sovereign lord, King Charles II. of Great Britain.

MONK (*in a cold, disdainful voice*). I know of no king of Great Britain. I know of no one here even worthy of bearing the name of gentleman. I remember that an unworthy snare was laid for me. I fell into that snare unsuspectingly—so much the worse for me. (*He turns and addresses CHARLES.*) Listen to what I have to say to you. So far as my body is concerned your plot has succeeded—do what you please with it. But remember you have not my mind. You may kill my body, but you cannot force my mind to do your will. Now make an end.

CHARLES. Monsieur D'Artagnan, the General's hands are tied. Have the goodness to set them free.

D'ARTAGNAN. But, sire—

CHARLES. Do as I say, monsieur.

(D'ARTAGNAN shrugs his shoulders, and, stepping up to MONK, frees his hands.)

CHARLES. Now, Monsieur D'Artagnan, I would have a word with the General.

(D'ARTAGNAN *salutes and retires into the alcove, and stands looking out of window*).

CHARLES (*looking earnestly at MONK*). General, you have made me the subject of a serious accusation. (MONK *bows coldly*.) I am not blaming you, for on certain points you are perfectly right. On others, however, you are wrong. For this reason, therefore, I ask you to withhold your condemnation of me until you have heard what I have to say. I do not even require you to answer, but only to listen.

MONK (*in a cold, hard voice*). I am in your power ; speak on.

CHARLES. Just now you cast at me a painful reproach. You implied that I sent Monsieur D'Artagnan here into England to lay a snare for you.

MONK. I did ; and I see no call why I should retract my words.

CHARLES. One moment, General. It is true that to Monsieur D'Artagnan (D'ARTAGNAN *turns and faces the King*) I owe the deepest gratitude for his heroic devotion. (D'ARTAGNAN *bows*.) But, General, and remember I do not say this to excuse myself, Monsieur D'Artagnan went into England solely of his own accord. He went there without orders, without interest, and without hope of gain, but, like the true-hearted gentleman he is, with the one desire to render a service to an unhappy king. By doing so he has added another brave action to a life that is already, I am sure, well filled. You may not believe me, General, for I can well understand such proofs of devotion are so rare that their reality may well be doubted.

MONK (*to D'ARTAGNAN*). You swear that this is true, monsieur ?

D'ARTAGNAN. Upon my honour as a soldier of France. What I did was upon my own responsibility and no other.

MONK (*to CHARLES after a moment's pause*). Very well, sir, it seems that I must retract my accusation. But now that I am here, what do you intend doing with me ?

CHARLES (*to D'ARTAGNAN*). Where is the ship you came in, monsieur ?

D'ARTAGNAN (*pointing through the open window to the light upon the water*). There it is, sire, awaiting my further orders.

CHARLES. Then have the goodness to call in your men.

(D'ARTAGNAN, *with a look of some surprise, crosses to the door and beckons. The four men enter silently.*)

CHARLES. Gentlemen, Monsieur D'Artagnan tells me that you are all of you devoted to the cause of your exiled King. Is that so ?

ALL. Ay, ay, sir; yes, yes.

CHARLES. Then, gentlemen, I am he.

ALL (*in amazement to one another*). The King ! The King !

(*They crowd round CHARLES, and, kneeling before him, kiss his hands amid cries of "God save your Majesty." "God send you soon to your own again."*)

CHARLES. I thank you, friends. But I am now about to ask another proof of your devotion. (*Murmurs of assent from all.*) Very well. You will place yourselves immediately under the command of General Monk, and will convey him back to Newcastle with all possible speed. (*To MONK.*) General, Monsieur

D'Artagnan will escort you. I place him under the safeguard of your honour.

MONK. Why, what means this?

CHARLES (*pointing to open door*). It means, General, that you are free.

MONK (*incredulously*). Free! To do as I will?

CHARLES. Yes, to do as you will. To fight against me or for me as God and your conscience may direct you. I will not seek to influence you, for if it pleases God to restore me to the throne of my martyred father, neither you nor any man shall deter me. But, General, if we never meet again, at least remember that Charles Stuart, unhappy exile though he be, scorns to make bargains with or to take an unfair advantage of an honourable foe, be he ever so powerful. (*He pauses.*) General, I see you have no sword—take mine. (*He draws his sword, and holds out the hilt to MONK, who stands a few seconds in deep thought. He then walks slowly towards the King and takes the sword in his hand.*)

MONK (*very slowly and deliberately*). Sire, I accept your sword. In six weeks I shall welcome your Majesty in London.

(*He turns and faces the others, who during the foregoing scene have been standing in rigid tension, hardly daring to breathe.*)

MONK (*raising his sword*). Gentlemen, long live his Majesty King Charles II.

ALL. The King, the King. God save the King.

CURTAIN.

ROCHESTER'S WOOING

CHARLOTTE BRONTË (*Jane Eyre*)

CHARACTERS.

JANE EYRE, *a slim, quiet, pale-faced girl of medium height—about eighteen years of age and very simply dressed.*

EDWARD ROCHESTER, *dark, stern-faced, and heavy-browed. Of medium height and broad-chested—about thirty-five years of age.*

RICHARD MASON, *a tall, sallow man of between thirty and forty years of age.*

THE MADWOMAN, *heavily cloaked and veiled.*

PERIOD . . . About 1840.

SCENE.—*A glade in Thornfield Park. There is a low fence at back separating it from the fields which stretch far away into the distance. C. there is a giant chestnut-tree, circled at the base by a rustic seat. Shubberies R. and L. The time is sunset on a brilliant summer evening, and the stage is filled with a rosy glow, which gradually gives place to bright moonlight as the scene progresses.*

Enter JANE EYRE from shrubbery R. She walks slowly across stage, but pauses C. as she hears the sound of a nightingale warbling among the distant trees. She stands thus a moment, quite lost to all her

surroundings, but starts as she hears the sound of footsteps approaching L., and then slips into the shadow of a tree R.

Enter MR ROCHESTER L. *He is smoking a cigar. He also pauses as he catches the sound of the bird's song. It abruptly ceases. He sighs, and seats himself C.* JANE EYRE *slips out from the shadow and begins to steal quietly away into the shrubbery.*

ROCHESTER (*quietly and without turning*). Jane.

(*She starts with surprise at being discovered, and stops. The nightingale's song recommences.*)

ROCHESTER. Come here, Jane.

(*She approaches him slowly.*)

ROCHESTER. Where were you going ?

JANE. Home, sir.

ROCHESTER. Home ! Why, on so lovely a night, with the nightingale singing in the wood, and while sunset is thus at meeting with moonrise—surely it is a shame to sit in the house.

(*He looks at her as if expecting an answer, but she gives him none.*)

ROCHESTER (*after a pause*). Jane, Thornfield is a pleasant place in summer, isn't it ?

JANE (*in a low voice*). Yes, sir.

ROCHESTER. You seem to have become in some degree attached to it, Jane.

JANE. I have, indeed, sir.

ROCHESTER. And though I don't comprehend it, I perceive you have acquired an affection for your foolish little charge—the child Adèle.

JANE. Yes, sir, I love her dearly.

ROCHESTER. And would be sorry to part with them both ?

JANE. Yes, indeed.

ROCHESTER. Ah ! a pity !

JANE (*surprised*). Why, sir, what do you mean ?

ROCHESTER. Jane, it is always the way of events in this life : no sooner does one get settled in a pleasant resting-place than a voice calls out to one to rise and move on, for the hour of repose is expired.

JANE. Must I then move on, sir ? Must I leave Thornfield ?

ROCHESTER. Yes, Jane. I am sorry, but I believe you must.

JANE (*sadly*). Well, sir, I shall be ready when the order to march comes.

ROCHESTER. It is come now. I must give it to-night.

JANE. To - night ? (*She pauses, looking at him steadfastly.*) Then you are going to be married, sir ?

ROCHESTER (*looking at her with great deliberation*). Yes, Jane, I believe I am. (*He rises and walks slowly across stage. He throws away his cigar and turns.*) With your usual acuteness, Jane, you have hit the right nail upon the head.

JANE (*rather brokenly*). I hope you will be very happy, sir.

ROCHESTER. Thank you, Jane ; I believe I shall.

JANE (*slowly*). She is very beautiful.

ROCHESTER. She ? To whom do you refer, Jane ?

JANE. Why, to your bride, sir, to Miss Ingram.

ROCHESTER. Oh, yes—of course ! And so, Jane, now I must remind you that the first time I or Rumour plainly intimated to you that it was my intention to put my old bachelor's neck into the sacred

noose and to take Miss Ingram to my bosom (*Jane turns away her head*)—but why do you turn away; are you not listening to me?

JANE (*lifting her eyes till they meet his*). Oh, yes, I am listening.

ROCHESTER. Very well, Jane, for I only wish to remind you that you yourself said to me, with that foresight and humility which so well befit your responsible and dependent position, that in case I married Miss Ingram both you and little Adèle had better trot forthwith. Therefore, Jane, you will perceive that I am only acting upon your wisdom. So Adèle must go to school, and you, Miss Eyre, must find a new situation.

JANE (*rising and turning away from him*). Yes, sir. I will advertise immediately.

(N.B.—*The stage is by this time in full moonlight.*)

ROCHESTER. In about a month's time I hope to be a bridegroom, and in the meantime I shall look for employment for you.

JANE. Thank you, sir, but I—

ROCHESTER. Oh, no need to apologise, Jane, for when a dependent does her duty as well as you have done yours, I consider that she has a claim upon her employer for any little assistance he can conveniently render her. Indeed, Jane, I think I know of a place in Ireland that will suit. You will like Ireland, Jane, I think.

JANE. It is a long way off, sir.

ROCHESTER. No matter—a girl of your sense will not object to the voyage or the distance.

JANE. Not the voyage, but the distance; for the sea will be a barrier— (*She pauses.*)

ROCHESTER. From what, Jane ?

JANE (*slowly*). From England and from Thornfield and— (*She pauses again.*)

ROCHESTER. Well ?

JANE. From *you*, sir.

(*She covers her face with her hands, and hastens away R. as if to leave him.*)

ROCHESTER. Stop, Jane !

JANE. No, no ; let me go !

ROCHESTER (*crossing to her and taking her gently by the arm*). We have been very good friends, Jane, have we not ?

JANE (*in a low voice*). Yes, indeed.

ROCHESTER. And when friends are on the eve of a separation they like to spend the little time that remains to them close to each other. So come ! (*He leads her gently towards the chestnut-tree C.*) See, Jane, while the stars enter into their shining life up yonder, let us sit here quietly in peace together. (*They sit down.*)

ROCHESTER (*after a short pause, looking at her intently*). Are you anything akin to me, do you think, Jane ?

(*She does not answer.*)

ROCHESTER. Because, do you know, Jane, that I sometimes have a queer feeling with regard to you—especially when you are near me, as you are now. It is as if I had a string somewhere under my left rib, tightly knotted to a similar string situated in a corresponding quarter of your little frame. And if that boisterous Channel come broad between us, I am afraid that cord communion will be snapped ; and then I've a nervous notion I should take to bleeding inwardly. And as for you, Jane, why, you'd forget me.

JANE. That I never should, sir, you know—— (*She breaks off and sobs convulsively.*)

(N.B.—*From now onward the light becomes by degrees more fitful as clouds pass over the moon. The wind, also, begins to rise, very gently at first, increasing in force later.*)

ROCHESTER. Why, little Jane, what is it ?

JANE (*bursting into passionate weeping*). Oh, I wish I had never been born, and had never come to Thornfield.

ROCHESTER. Why, Jane, do you like Thornfield so well ?

JANE. I love it ! I love it because I have lived in it a delightful life. I have not been trampled upon. I have not been buried with inferior minds. I have talked, face to face, with what I reverence, with what I delight in—with an original, expanded mind. I have known you, Mr Rochester, and it strikes me with terror and anguish to feel I must be torn from you for ever. Oh, yes, yes ; I see the necessity of departure, and it is like looking on the necessity of death.

ROCHESTER. Where do you see the necessity ?

JANE. In the shape of Miss Ingram—your bride.

ROCHESTER. My bride ! I have no bride.

JANE. But you will have.

ROCHESTER (*looking very earnestly at her*). Yes—I will—I will.

JANE (*rising*). Then I must go—you have said it yourself.

ROCHESTER (*also rising*). No, no ; you must stay.

JANE (*turning passionately upon him and speaking with extreme intensity*). I tell you I must go ! Do you think I can stay to become nothing to you ? Do you

think I am an automaton—a mere machine without feelings ? Do you think, because I am poor, plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless ? You are wrong—I have as much heart and soul as you, and, if God had gifted me with beauty, I should have made it as hard for you to leave me as it is for me to leave you. I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities, or even of mortal flesh—it is my spirit that addresses your spirit, just as if both had passed through the grave and we stood at God's feet, equal—as we are !

ROCHESTER. As we are ! (*He takes her in his arms and kisses her.*) So, Jane.

(*A distant peal of thunder is faintly heard.*)

JANE. No, no, sir ; let me go, I beg you !

ROCHESTER. Where to, my little Jane ? To Ireland ?

JANE. Yes, yes, to Ireland ; or to anywhere. (*She struggles to be free.*)

ROCHESTER. Be still, Jane, be still—you struggle like a wild, frantic bird.

JANE. I am no bird and no net ensnares me. I am a free human being with an independent will, which I now exert to leave you. (*She frees herself from him.*)

ROCHESTER (*quickly*). Come to my side, Jane, and let us explain and understand each other.

JANE. I can never come to your side again—I am torn away and can never return.

ROCHESTER. But, Jane, I summon you to come.

JANE. No, no ; your bride stands between us.

ROCHESTER (*crossing to her and taking her in his arms*). My bride is here.

Jane. No, no ; you mock me ! I do not believe you !

ROCHESTER. You shall be convinced. What love

have I for Miss Ingram? None. None. None. All my love is for you, you strange, almost unearthly thing, and I entreat you to accept me as your husband.

(N.B.—*The stage becomes very much darker during the ensuing, and the wind gathers greatly in volume.*)

JANE (*incredulously*). You mean you love me—and not her?

ROCHESTER. Yes, Jane, I do mean it. I love you with all my heart and soul.

JANE. You truly love me and wish me to be your wife?

ROCHESTER. Yes, Jane, I do. I swear it.

JANE. Then I will marry you!

ROCHESTER (*drawing her to him*). My little wife.

JANE. Edward—my husband.

(*They embrace one another as another clap of thunder, this time nearer, is heard.*)

ROCHESTER. Jane, Jane, you are mine entirely now.

JANE. Yes, yours for always—you have made my happiness, and I will try to make yours.

(*The stage now is in almost complete darkness. Enter RICHARD MASON. He leads by the hand the closely veiled and heavily cloaked figure of a woman.*)

MASON. Stop! (ROCHESTER and JANE start apart.) This thing cannot proceed.

ROCHESTER (*furiously*). Who are you, and how dare you come here?

MASON. Look in my face and you will know.

(*ROCHESTER strides up to him and peers into his face. There is a vivid flash of lightning.*)

ROCHESTER. My God ! Richard Mason !

(*Thunder.*)

JANE (*wildly, to Rochester*). Oh, what does all this mean—speak, I beg you.

MASON. It means, young lady, that this man can never marry you, for he has a wife now living—my unhappy sister.

JANE. It's not true—it can't be true ; I'll not believe it. (*To Rochester.*) Oh, why don't you speak ?

(*Rochester remains immovable.*)

MASON. He cannot, because he knows it is true, and that fifteen years ago he was married to this woman. (*He throws back the veil from his companion's face, and discloses the wild, distorted countenance of a madwoman, who breaks into high, demoniacal laughter.*)

JANE (*shrinking back in horror, to Rochester*). Oh, for God's sake, say this is not true, and that this woman (*she shudders*) is not your wife.

ROCHESTER. No, my poor little Jane, for it is true. In the sight of man this creature is my wife.

(*Jane buries her face in her hands and moans.*)

ROCHESTER (*fiercely to Mason.*) Go, curse you ! You have done your mischief. Take her (*indicating the Madwoman*) away before I do you both an injury.

(*Exeunt Mason and the Madwoman, whose crazy laughter is heard dying away in the trees.*)

ROCHESTER (*turning upon Jane*). Well—have you nothing to say to me—nothing bitter—nothing poignant ?

JANE (*brokenly*). Nothing, nothing. Leave me, I beg you.

ROCHESTER (*wildly*). Jane, little Jane—forgive me.

I loved you so—that is my defence. God knows I would have made you a good husband, but that fate has out-maneuvred me. When, years ago, I was inveigled into marrying that—that woman, I did not know she came of a family of drunkards and maniacs. Oh, Jane, can't you imagine through what I have lived ? You have seen the sort of being she has become, and judge whether I had a right to break the compact and seek sympathy with something human. Believe me, Jane, I never meant to wound you thus. Can you ever forgive me ?

JANE (*sobbing*). Yes, I forgive you.

(*He takes her hand and presses it to his lips.*)

ROCHESTER. Farewell ! (*He hurries off.*)

(JANE, left alone, takes two or three faltering steps after him with outstretched hands.)

JANE. O Edward ! Oh, my love !

(*She falls fainting to the ground. The crazy laughter is again heard away in the distance. There is a vivid flash of lightning, followed immediately by a crack of thunder.*)

CURTAIN.

LADY CATHERINE'S VISIT

JANE AUSTEN (*Pride and Prejudice*)

CHARACTERS.

LADY CATHERINE DE BOURGH, a tall, large woman with strongly marked features. Her manner is not conciliating, but such as to impress upon others the inferiority of their rank. She speaks in an authoritative tone of self-importance.

MR BENNET A middle-aged, quiet, cultured man.

MRS BENNET His wife.
Also middle-aged. She is a talkative, not very well-bred woman.

JANE Their eldest daughter.

ELIZABETH Their second daughter.

She is a pretty girl of about eighteen or nineteen years of age. There is a mixture of sweetness and archness in her manner that makes it difficult for her to affront people.

LYDIA Their third daughter.

THE REV. MR COLLINS A cousin of the Bennet family.
He is a tall, heavy-looking young man of five-and-twenty. His air is grave and stately and his manners very formal.

PERIOD About the end of the eighteenth century.

SCENE.— *A sitting-room at Longbourn. Windows back looking on to gardens. Doors R. and L. MRS BENNET, JANE, and ELIZABETH are discovered seated, employed in needlework. LYDIA is reading a book, but with scant interest. After the curtain rises there*

is a considerable pause while they all continue their occupations.

LYDIA (*yawning and throwing down her book*). Do you know, mamma, that my Uncle Phillips talks of turning away Richard ? and if he does Colonel Forster will hire him.

JANE. No, I don't believe it.

LYDIA. But it is true, for my aunt told me so herself on Saturday.

MRS BENNET. Hush, hush, my dears. I hear the gentlemen coming from their wine.

(Enter MR BENNET and MR COLLINS.)

MR COLLINS (*crossing to MRS BENNET and taking a chair by her*). A most delightful dinner, my dear Mrs Bennet, a most delightful dinner. And to which of my fair young cousins, may I ask, do we owe the excellence of the cooking ?

MRS BENNET (*stiffening at the mere suggestion*). To none of them, Mr Collins. My daughters have nothing to do with the kitchen. I can assure you we can well afford to keep a cook.

MR COLLINS (*greatly disturbed at his faux pas*). Of course—of course. Dear me—how could I have suggested it ? I really must apologise—allow me—I beg.

MRS BENNET (*softening*). Pray do not mention it, sir. I am not at all displeased.

MR COLLINS. I am vastly obliged, Mrs Bennet. I cannot think how I came to suggest such a thing. I—er—

(He dissolves into an extremely uncomfortable silence.

There is another pause. MRS BENNET, JANE, and ELIZABETH resume their needlework, while LYDIA

again takes up her book and idly turns over the leaves.)

MR BENNET. I understand, Mr Collins, that you are very fortunate in your patroness.

MR COLLINS (*brightening*). Yes, indeed, sir, it is so. I assure you that Lady Catherine de Bourgh's consideration and attention to my comfort is truly remarkable.

MRS BENNET (*rather impressed*). Indeed, Mr Collins, that must be very gratifying.

MR COLLINS (*with becoming solemnity*). You are right, Mrs Bennet. It is. Never in my whole life have I witnessed such behaviour in a person of rank—such affability, such condescension—as I myself have experienced from Lady Catherine. I have had the honour of preaching two discourses before her, and she has been graciously pleased to approve of both of them. (*With increasing importance*.) Already she has asked me to dine twice at Rosings, and only last Saturday sent for me to make up her pool of quadrille. Moreover, my dear Mrs Bennet, she invariably speaks to me as she would to any other gentleman, and (*his enthusiasm increases still more*) she makes not the slightest objection to my joining in the society of the neighbourhood.

(LYDIA *yawns audibly*.)

MR COLLINS (*much offended*). I fear that I importune my young cousin.

MRS BENNET. Lydia, my child, I am amazed. How can you so forget yourself? Proceed, Mr Collins, I beg. Lady Catherine appears to be a most agreeable woman. Ah, it is a pity that great ladies in general are not more like her.

MR COLLINS (*his enthusiasm returning*). Yes, indeed, madam. Although I believe by some people Lady Catherine is reckoned proud, I have never found anything but affability in her. Do you know, she has even condescended to advise me to marry—provided (*he casts his eyes in the direction of ELIZABETH, who immediately applies herself to her work and avoids his glance*) I choose with discretion. Already she has visited my parsonage, and has perfectly approved of the alteration I am making. Indeed (*he lowers his voice and assumes the general bearing of one about to impart a state secret of vital importance*), she has even vouchsafed to suggest the construction of some shelves in one of the upstairs apartments. (*He pauses to note the effect of this new example of condescension.*)

MR BENNET (*who throughout the discourse has worn an air of patient resignation*). Very proper and civil of her, I am sure. And does she live near you, sir?

MR COLLINS. My humble abode is only separated from Rosings Park by a narrow lane.

MRS BENNET. And has she any family?

MR COLLINS. Only one daughter, madam, who is the heiress of her very considerable property.

MRS BENNET (*dolefully*). Ah, then she is better off than many girls. What sort of a young lady is she?

MR COLLINS. She is indeed a most charming young lady. Lady Catherine herself says that in point of true beauty she is far superior to the handsomest of her sex, because there is that in her features which makes her a young lady of distinguished birth.

She is, unfortunately, of a sickly constitution, but is perfectly amiable, and often condescends to drive by my humble abode in her little phaeton and ponies.

MRS BENNET. And has she been presented?

MR COLLINS. Alas, no! Unhappily her indifferent state of health prevents her being in town, and by that means, as I told Lady Catherine myself one day, the British Court is deprived of one of its brightest jewels. Her ladyship was most pleased (*with self complacence*). That is the kind of little thing that pleases her, and you may imagine I am happy on every occasion to offer such delicate little compliments which are always acceptable to ladies.

MR BENNET (*aside to ELIZABETH*). The man is even more absurd than I thought. (*ALOUD*.) It is indeed happy for you, sir, that you possess the talent of flattering with delicacy. May I ask whether these pleasing attentions proceed from the impulse of the moment, or are the result of previous study?

MR COLLINS (*with befitting modesty*). They arise, sir, chiefly from what is passing at the time, though sometimes I amuse myself with suggesting and arranging such elegant little compliments as may be adapted to ordinary occasions. I always wish to give them as unstudied an air as possible.

MR BENNET. Indeed—indeed—most interesting.

MRS BENNET. But to return to Miss de Bourgh. May I ask, sir, whether she is betrothed?

MR COLLINS. It is generally understood that she will become the wife of her cousin, Mr Darcy. (*At this for the first time ELIZABETH evinces interest and listens to the ensuing conversation with a smile*.) The arrangement, I believe, was entered into when they were both children.

MRS BENNET. Mr Darcy! Why that would be Mr Bingley's disagreeable friend. You remember him, Elizabeth, and how you disliked him?

ELIZABETH (*rising*). Oh, yes, mamma, I remember

him perfectly—but see, the afternoon is so fine that surely Mr Collins would like a walk in the garden?

MR COLLINS (*also rising*). That would be charming, my dear Miss Elizabeth, quite charming. I shall be delighted to accompany you.

ELIZABETH (*quickly*). I pray you will excuse me, sir, I have a slight headache.

MR COLLINS (*distinctly rebuffed*). Oh!

ELIZABETH. But Lydia will feel honoured to do so, I feel sure.

MRS BENNET. Yes, Lydia, my dear, go with your cousin.

(LYDIA *rises with no very good grace, and goes out followed by MR COLLINS.*)

MR BENNET (*with a yawn*). I think I'll go to the library for a while. That fellow's conversation has made me tired.

MRS BENNET (*rising and putting away her work*). Very well, Mr Bennet, and I will accompany you. There are several little matters upon which I wish to consult you.

MR BENNET (*without much enthusiasm*). Very well, my dear. Come if you must.

Exeunt.

(JANE *rises and prepares to follow them, but ELIZABETH detains her.*)

ELIZABETH. Stay, dearest Jane. There is something I must tell you.

JANE. Why, Lizzie, what is it?

ELIZABETH (*hesitatingly*). Jane, I am engaged.

JANE. Engaged. To whom?

ELIZABETH. To Mr Darcy.

JANE. No, no, you are joking, Lizzy. I cannot believe it. Engaged to Mr Darcy? It is impossible.

ELIZABETH (*earnestly*). Yet, indeed, dear Jane, I am in earnest. I speak nothing but the truth. He loves me, and we are engaged.

JANE (*doubtfully*). But, Lizzy, you know how you dislike him.

ELIZABETH (*with a little laugh*). Oh, *that* is all forgot. Perhaps I did not always love him so well as I do now, but in such cases a good memory is unpardonable.

JANE. Good Heaven! Can it really be so? Yet now I must believe you. (*Kisses her*.) My dear, dear Lizzy, I would, oh, I do congratulate you, but are you certain—forgive the question—are you quite certain that you can be happy with him?

ELIZABETH (*returning the kiss*). Yes, dearest Jane, there can be no doubt of that. It is already settled between us that we are to be the happiest couple in the world.

Enter MRS BENNET. *She is evidently in a great flurry.*

MRS BENNET. My dears, there is a grand carriage coming up the drive. To whom can it belong?

(JANE runs to the window and peeps out.)

JANE. It has stopped at the door, and there is a lady alighting. Oh, she has come in.

Enter a Servant.

SERVANT. Lady Catherine de Bourgh.

Enter LADY CATHERINE. *She walks with a very stately air and has the bearing of one fully cognisant of her own superiority over the world in general.*

Exit Servant.

LADY CATHERINE (*to MRS BENNET, who is utterly overcome with amazement and flattery at receiving so important a guest.*). Mrs Bennet, I presume.

MRS BENNET. Yes, my lady, and I——

LADY CATHERINE. I hope you are well. These, I suppose (*indicating JANE and ELIZABETH*), are your daughters.

MRS BENNET. Yes, madam. This is my eldest daughter, Jane, and this is my second, Elizabeth.

LADY CATHERINE. Indeed. Then this is the young lady I have come to see.

(MRS BENNET *betrays a lively interest.*)

ELIZABETH (*composedly*). I am honoured, I am sure.

LADY CATHERINE (*to MRS BENNET*). You have a very small park here.

MRS BENNET (*deprecatingly*). It is nothing in comparison, doubtless, with Rosings, my lady, but I assure you, it is much larger than Sir William Lucas's.

LADY CATHERINE. Indeed! (*She looks about her with a supercilious air.*) This must be a most inconvenient sitting-room for the evening in summer. The windows are full west.

MRS BENNET. Oh, I can assure your ladyship that I never sit here in the evening.

LADY CATHERINE (*turning*). Miss Bennet, I shall be obliged if you will favour me with a few moments' conversation. I observed just now that there seemed to be a prettyish kind of wilderness on one side of your lawn. I shall be glad to take a turn in it, if you will favour me with your company.

MRS BENNET. Oh, I would not hear of it, my lady. Pray allow me to withdraw?

(LADY CATHERINE *bows stiffly.*)

MRS BENNET. Jane, my dear. (*Mrs Bennet crosses to door followed by Jane.*)

MRS BENNET (*turning to Lady Catherine and curtsying.*) My Lady!

LADY CATHERINE (*stiffly inclining her head*). Madam!

Exeunt Mrs Bennet and Jane.

ELIZABETH. Will your ladyship be seated?

LADY CATHERINE. Thank you. (*She sits down.*) You can be at no loss, Miss Bennet, to understand the reason of my visit hither. Your own heart, your own conscience, must tell you why I came.

ELIZABETH. Indeed, you are mistaken, madam. I am not at all able to account for the honour of seeing you here.

LADY CATHERINE (*angrily*). Miss Bennet, you ought to know that I am not to be trifled with. But however insincere *you* may be, *you* shall not find me so. A report of a most alarming nature reached me two days ago. I was told that *you*, Miss Elizabeth Bennet, would, in all likelihood, be shortly united to my nephew, my own nephew, Mr Darcy. Though I *know* it must be a scandalous falsehood, though I would not injure him so much as to suppose the truth of it possible, I instantly resolved on setting off for this place that I make my sentiments known to *you*.

ELIZABETH. If you believed it impossible to be true I wonder you took the trouble of coming so far. What could your ladyship propose by it?

LADY CATHERINE. At once to insist upon having such a report universally contradicted.

ELIZABETH (*coolly*). Your coming to Longbourn to see me will be rather a confirmation of it—if indeed such a report is in existence.

LADY CATHERINE (*indignantly*). If! Do you pretend to be ignorant of it? Has it not been industriously circulated by yourselves? Do you not know that such a report is spread abroad?

ELIZABETH. I never heard that it was.

LADY CATHERINE. And can you likewise declare there is no *foundation* for it?

ELIZABETH. I do not pretend to possess equal frankness with your ladyship. *You* may ask questions which *I* shall not choose to answer.

LADY CATHERINE (*angrily*). This is not to be borne. Miss Bennet, I insist on being satisfied. Has he, has my nephew, made you an offer of marriage?

ELIZABETH. Your ladyship has declared it to be impossible.

LADY CATHERINE. It ought to be so. It must be so while he retains the use of his reason. But *your* arts and allurements may, in a moment of infatuation, have made him forget what he owes to himself and to all his family. You may have drawn him in.

ELIZABETH. If I have then I shall be the last person in the world to confess it.

LADY CATHERINE. Miss Bennet, do you know who I am? I have not been accustomed to such language as this. I am almost the nearest relation he has in the world and am entitled to know all his dearest concerns.

ELIZABETH. But you are not entitled to know *mine*, nor will such behaviour as this ever induce me to be explicit.

LADY CATHERINE. Let me be rightly understood. This match, to which you have the presumption to aspire, can never take place—no, never. Mr Darcy is engaged to *my daughter*. Now what have you to say?

ELIZABETH (*quite unmoved*). Only this—that if it is

so, you can have no reason to suppose he will make the offer to me.

LADY CATHERINE (*after a moment's hesitation*). The engagement between them is of a peculiar kind. From their infancy they have been intended for each other. It was the favourite wish of *his* mother and of hers. While in their cradles we planned the union, and now, at the moment when the wishes of both sisters would be accomplished, in their marriage, to be prevented by a young woman of inferior birth, of no importance in the world, and wholly unallied to the family! Do you pay no regard to the wishes of his friends—to his tacit engagement with Miss de Bourgh? Are you lost to every feeling of propriety and delicacy? Have you not heard me say that from his earliest hours he was destined for his cousin?

ELIZABETH. Yes, and I have heard it before. But what is that to me? If there is no other objection to my marrying your nephew, I certainly shall not be kept from it by knowing that his mother and his aunt wished him to marry Miss de Bourgh. You both did as much as you could in planning the marriage. Its completion depended on others. If Mr Darcy is neither by honour nor inclination confined to his cousin, why is he not to make another choice? And if I am that choice, why may I not accept him?

LADY CATHERINE. Because honour, decorum, prudence, nay, interest, forbid it. Yes, Miss Bennet, interest; for do not expect to be noticed by his family or friends if you wilfully act against the inclinations of all. You will be censured, slighted, and despised by every one connected with him. Your alliance will be a disgrace; your name will never be mentioned by any of us.

ELIZABETH (*still perfectly unmoved*). These are heavy misfortunes, but the wife of Mr Darcy must have extraordinary sources of happiness necessarily attached to the situation, that she could, upon the whole, have no cause to repine.

LADY CATHERINE. Obstinate, headstrong girl! I am ashamed of you! Understand, Miss Bennet, that I came here with the determined resolution of carrying out my purpose, nor will I be dissuaded from it. I have not been used to submit to any person's whims. I have not been in the habit of brooking disappointment.

ELIZABETH. *That* will make your ladyship's situation at present more pitiable, but it will have no effect on *me*.

LADY CATHERINE. I will not be interrupted! Here me in silence. My daughter and my nephew are formed for each other. They are descended on the maternal side from the same noble line, and on their father's from respectable, honourable, and ancient, though untitled families. Their fortune on both sides is splendid. What is to divide them? The upstart pretensions of a young woman without family, connections, or fortune! Is this to be endured? It must not, it shall not be! If you were sensible of your own good, you would not wish to quit that sphere in which you have been brought up.

ELIZABETH. In marrying your nephew I should not consider myself quitting that sphere. He is a gentleman and I am a gentleman's daughter: so far, we are equal.

LADY CATHERINE. Your father may be a gentleman. But what was your mother? Who are your uncles and aunts? Do you imagine me ignorant of their position?

ELIZABETH. If your nephew does not object to them, they can be nothing to *you*.

(LADY CATHERINE makes an exclamation of anger.)

LADY CATHERINE (*after a moment's deliberation*). Will you promise me never to enter into an engagement with him?

ELIZABETH (*decisively*). I will make no promise of the kind.

LADY CATHERINE. Miss Bennet, I am shocked and astonished. I expected to find a reasonable young woman. But do not deceive yourself that I shall ever recede. I shall not go away till you have given me the assurance I require.

ELIZABETH. And I certainly *never* shall give it. I am not to be intimidated into anything so wholly unreasonable. Your ladyship wants Mr Darcy to marry your daughter, but would my giving you the wished-for promise make *their* marriage at all more probable? Supposing him to be attached to me (LADY CATHERINE winces) would my refusing to accept his hand make him wish to bestow it on his cousin? Allow me to say, Lady Catherine, that the arguments with which you have supported this extraordinary application have been as frivolous as the application was ill-judged. I must beg to be importuned no further. (*She rises.*)

LADY CATHERINE. Not so hasty, if you please—I have by no means done yet.

ELIZABETH. I do not think you can have anything more to say. You have insulted me in every possible method. I must beg leave to wish your ladyship good-day. (*She curtsies.*)

LADY CATHERINE (*rising highly incensed*). Unfeeling, selfish girl! Do you not consider that a connection

with you must disgrace my nephew in the eyes of everybody ?

ELIZABETH. Lady Catherine, I have nothing further at all to say.

LADY CATHERINE. Very well. But do not imagine, Miss Bennet, that your ambitions will ever be gratified. I shall now know how to act. (*She stalks majestically to the door and then turns to ELIZABETH again.*) I take no leave of you, Miss Bennet. I send no compliments to your mother. You deserve no such attention. I am seriously displeased.

Exit.

ELIZABETH (*with a little laugh*). Poor Lady Catherine !

(*The clock on the manleshelf chimes the half-hour.*)

ELIZABETH (*taking up her hat from the window seat*). Now to meet my dear Darcy.

Exit through windows at back.

CURTAIN.

THE BISHOP'S CANDLESTICKS

HUGO (*Les Misérables*)

CHARACTERS

THE BISHOP, *a white-haired, frail, kindly old man of about seventy-five years.*

JEAN VALJEAN, *a muscular, robust man of middle height and aged about forty-six. His clothes are wretchedly ragged and he carries a heavy stick.*

MDLLE. BAPTISTINE, *the Bishop's Sister, a tall, pale, slim, gentle woman, about ten years younger than the Bishop.*

MME. MAGLOIRE, *the Bishop's Housekeeper, a fair, plump little middle-aged woman. Rather short of breath.*

PERIOD 1815.

SCENE.—*The Dining-room of the BISHOP'S House. It is a very plainly furnished apartment, containing only the barest necessaries, there being no furniture other than a square table C., which is half set for supper, and four or five straw chairs. At the back of stage is a door and window which open upon garden. On the L. of door stands an old rosewood sideboard upon which is a pair of antique silver candlesticks. There is another door R. which leads to the other rooms of the house. The time is*

evening and a cheerful fire is burning in the large open fireplace L., before which MDLLE. BAPTISTINE, the Bishop's sister, is seated. When the curtain rises she is dozing, but awakes with a start as MME. MAGLOIRE, who is carrying a small basket containing a few purchases she has been making for the frugal supper, enters.

MDLLE. BAPTISTINE. Good-evening, madame.

MME. MAGLOIRE. Good-evening, mademoiselle.

(She takes off her shawl and begins to unpack the basket, placing its contents with great care, upon the table.)

MME. MAGLOIRE. Has Monseigneur not returned yet, mademoiselle ?

MDLLE. BAPTISTINE. No. Why do you ask ? Is anything the matter ?

MME. MAGLOIRE. Yes, mademoiselle, there is. See here.

(She crosses to the door, B., and pulls it open. The front door is on the latch.)

MDLLE. BAPTISTINE (*surprised*). Well, and what of that ? You know very well it is my brother's invariable custom never to bolt that door.

MME. MAGLOIRE. Yes, mademoiselle, I do know. But listen. Just now, as I was making my way down to the market, I heard people talking of an ill-looking fellow, who is wandering about the town, and they were saying, mademoiselle, that it would be unpleasant for any one out late to meet such a suspicious-looking vagabond. And, mademoiselle, you know how badly managed the police are in our town ; therefore, folks were saying it would be wise to be one's own police and to lock one's doors.

(During her speech the BISHOP has entered, unseen by the two women, and now stands watching them in an abstracted manner. MDLLE. BAPTISTINE turns towards MME MAGLOIRE, and seeing the BISHOP, gives a little cry.)

MDLLE. BAPTISTINE. Brother, did you hear what Mme. Magloire was saying ?

THE BISHOP (*walking to the fire, where he stands warming his hands at the blaze*). I heard vaguely something about a dangerous fellow wandering about the town. Who is he ?

MME. MAGLOIRE (*volubly*). Oh, Monseigneur, I cannot tell you that. I only know that he is evidently some gallows-bird, for he has a frightful face. Indeed he has been refused a lodging at both the inns.

THE BISHOP. Is he so bad as that ?

MME. MAGLOIRE (*with growing confidence*). Yes, indeed, Monseigneur, and depend upon it, some misfortune will happen in the town to-night. Everybody says so, and what else can one expect with such a police ? Fancy living in a mountain town and not having lanthorns in the streets at nights ! Now, I say, Monseigneur, and mademoiselle says—

MDLLE. BAPTISTINE. No, no, I say nothing. Whatever my brother does is right.

MME. MAGLOIRE (*impatiently ignoring her*). We say, Monseigneur, that with the door unbolted, the house is not safe, and if Monseigneur will allow me, I will shoot the bolts this very moment, for a house door which can be opened by the first passer-by is most terrible ; besides which Monseigneur is always accustomed to say “ Come in,” and in the middle of the night, oh, mon Dieu, there is no occasion even to ask for that permission.

(*A loud knock upon door is heard. MME. MAGLOIRE shrieks.*)

THE BISHOP (*calmly.*) Come in.

(*The door is thrown open and JEAN VALJEAN enters. In his hand he grasps a stick and he looks round the room with the savage, hunted look of a desperate man.*)

JEAN (*harshly*). My name is Jean Valjean. I am a galley slave.

(*MME. MAGLOIRE and MDLLE. BAPTISTINE instinctively draw together.*)

JEAN. I was liberated only four days ago. Since then I have been walking—Oh, my God, how I have been walking! This evening I came into your town. I went to the inn, but was sent away because of my yellow passport, which I had been obliged to show at the police office. I went to another inn, but there, too, the landlord turned me out. Everywhere it was the same. No one would have dealings with me. I went to the prison, but the gaoler would not take me in. I crept into a dog's kennel, but the dog bit me, and drove me out; it, too, seemed to know me. I was lying upon the stones in the square when a good woman pointed to your door and told me to knock upon it. That is why I am here. What sort of a house is this? Do you keep an inn? I can pay, never fear, for I have money, 109 francs, do you hear? Can I stay here? I am tired and famished. Will you let me stay?

THE BISHOP (*very quietly*). Mme. Magloire, you will lay another knife and fork.

JEAN (*advancing a few steps*). Wait a minute. Did you not hear me say I was a convict, a galley slave? (*He takes a large yellow paper from his pocket and holds it out to the BISHOP.*) See, here is my passport. Yellow, do you see, yellow? The cursed thing turns me out wherever I go. Well, will you not read it? (*The BISHOP shakes his head.*) No. Very well, I will tell you what it says: listen. It says that Jean Valjean, a liberated convict, has remained nineteen years at the galleys. Five years for robbery and fourteen for trying to escape four times. He is very dangerous. (*He gives a hoarse laugh.*) Well, what do you say now? Are you still willing to let me stay?

THE BISHOP. Mme. Magloire, kindly go and prepare the guest chamber.

(*She nods and exits door R., looking fearfully at JEAN VALJEAN.*)

THE BISHOP (*speaking very kindly and laying his hand upon JEAN's shoulder*). Come to the fire and warm yourself, monsieur. We shall sup directly.

JEAN (*hardly able to realise that he is not to be turned away*). Is this true? Do you mean you will let me stay—me, a convict? You called me monsieur; the others always say, "Get out, you dog." Does it mean that I shall have supper and a bed with mattresses and sheets like every one else? For nineteen years I have not slept in a bed—My God!

(*He covers his face with his hands.*)

JEAN (*suffering the BISHOP to take away his knapsack and stick*). Who are you?

THE BISHOP. I am a priest.

JEAN. A priest! Why, of course. What a fool I was not to have noticed your cassock. But one's mind goes

dull after nineteen years at the galleys. (*He pauses for a moment and then removes his cap.*) Monsieur, you are a very humane man not to feel contempt. Shall you want me to pay?

THE BISHOP. No, keep your money. How long did it take you to earn those 109 francs?

JEAN. Nineteen years.

THE BISHOP (*with a sigh and regarding him with intense pity*). Nineteen years!

Enter MME. MAGLOIRE. *She carries a tray upon which is a dish of cold meats, some bread, a bottle of wine, and some knives and forks, all of which she places upon the table. JEAN watches her the while with hungry, eager eyes.*

THE BISHOP. Come, monsieur, to supper. Come, sister.

(*He leads MDLLE. BAPTISTINE to the table, JEAN following them. The BISHOP says a grace.*)

THE BISHOP (*pouring some wine into a glass and handing it to JEAN*). Drink this, monsieur. The night winds are sharp on the Alps, and you must need warmth.

(*JEAN drains the glass and then falls voraciously upon the bread and meat that MME. MAGLOIRE has set before him.*)

THE BISHOP. Surely, madame, this lamp is giving a very bad light. Will you have the goodness to light the candles?

(*She does so and sets the candlesticks on the table.*)

JEAN. Monsieur le Curé, you are a good man, for you do not despise me. You have received me as a

friend and light your wax candles for me although I have not hidden from you who I am or from where I came.

THE BISHOP (*gently*). My son, you need not have told me who you were. This is not my house but the house of Christ. This door does not ask a man who enters whether he has a name, but if he has a sorrow. You are suffering, hungry, and alone, and so you are welcome. Do not thank me or say I am receiving you at my house, for I tell you, who are a passer-by, that you are more at home here than I, for you are in need of shelter. Why should I have wanted to know your name? Besides, before you told it me, you had one which I already knew.

JEAN (*amazed*). What, you knew me?

THE BISHOP. Yes, you are my brother, and I know that you have suffered.

JEAN. Suffered! My God, yes, I have suffered. The red jacket, the cannon ball on your foot, a plank to sleep on, heat, cold, labour, blows; the dungeon for a word, the chain even when you were ill. Suffered! Why the very dogs were happier! Nineteen years of it! And I am forty-six! (*He laughs wildly and begins to eat again.*)

THE BISHOP (*earnestly*). Listen to me, my son. You have come from a place of sorrow, and if now you have left that mournful place your heart is filled with anger and hatred of your fellow-beings, you are still worthy of great pity. But if you leave it with thoughts of kindness, gentleness, and peace, you are worth more than any of us.

(JEAN makes no reply, but pushes away his plate.)

THE BISHOP. But now, monsieur, the hour is late and you need rest.

(He rises and murmurs a grace. MME. MAGLOIRE begins hastily to remove the silver plate from the table, depositing it in a basket which she places upon the sideboard, JEAN watching her furtively meanwhile.)

THE BISHOP (*kissing* MDLLE. BAPTISTINE). Good-night, sister.

MDLLE. BAPTISTINE. Good-night, brother.

Exit MDLLE. BAPTISTINE.

THE BISHOP (*to* JEAN, *who is still watching* MME. MAGLOIRE). And now, monsieur, let me lead you to your room. Come.

Exeunt the BISHOP and JEAN.

MME. MAGLOIRE (*piling up the remainder of the supper things on a tray*). Mon Dieu, mon Dieu ! What will Monseigneur do next ? We shall be fortunate if we are not murdered in our beds, I vow. (*She blows out the candles.*) Well, well, I for one shall put my bed against the door. (*She blows out the lamp.*) Even then I doubt whether I shall close an eye.

(*She takes up the tray but leaves the basket upon the sideboard. Exit. The stage is now only lit by the fitful firelight and a shaft of moonlight that penetrates through the window. There is a pause of several moments and the door R. is opened stealthily and JEAN VALJEAN tiptoes into the room. He stops about the middle and stands listening, then hearing nothing continues his way across to the sideboard. As he sees the plate-basket is still there he utters a short exclamation and takes it up, and is about to remove its contents when his conscience pricks him. He hesitates for a moment and lays the basket down,*

but then with an impatient ejaculation lifts it up again and pours out the silver upon the table C., letting the basket fall upon the floor. He then looks round the room in search of his knapsack and stick, and perceives they are leaning against the wall in the full glow of the firelight. He crosses quickly and fetches them, returns to table and crams the plate in the knapsack. He takes a last look round, opens the door, and disappears into the night, closing the door after him with a slight noise. There is another short pause and then MDLLE. BAPTISTINE appears door R. She is wrapped in a dressing-gown.)

MDLLE. BAPTISTINE. What is that ? Who is there ?
(Pause.) I thought I heard some one moving. Ah !
(She starts as the door R. opens again and MME.
MAGLOIRE, also attired in a dressing-gown, enters.)

MME. MAGLOIRE (perceiving a figure in the moonlight). Oh, mon Dieu ! Help, help, who is that ?

MDLLE. BAPTISTINE (who is nearly as alarmed herself, in a tone of relief). It is only me, madame. I came down because I thought I heard some one, but it must have been fancy. But what are you doing ? (Nervously.) Did you hear anything ?

MME. MAGLOIRE (greatly relieved). No, mademoiselle, not I. Only I was so flurried by the presence of that terrible brigand that I quite forgot to take away the plate-basket. I only remembered it as I was getting into bed, so have come down to fetch it.

MDLLE. BAPTISTINE. Well, be quick, or we shall disturb my brother.

(MME. MAGLOIRE crosses to the sideboard and perceiving that the basket is not there, gives a loud shriek.)

MDLLE. BAPTISTINE. Why, whatever is the matter, madame ?

MME. MAGLOIRE. Oh, mon Dieu ! it is gone, it is gone ! Help, help ! Monseigneur, help ! Thieves ! Robbers !

Enter the BISHOP. He is still fully dressed and carries a lamp.

THE BISHOP. Why, what is this ?

MME. MAGLOIRE. Oh, Monseigneur, the plate-basket is gone—do you know where it is ?

THE BISHOP (*pointing to where it is lying*). Yes, there.

MME. MAGLOIRE. Ah ! But see, it is empty. Oh, Monseigneur, that terrible man who came to-night was a robber. Oh, the villain, the villain ! He has gone away and stolen our plate.

THE BISHOP (*very sadly*). Are you so sure the plate was ours ?

MME. MAGLOIRE. Oh, Monseigneur !

THE BISHOP. Mme. Magloire, perhaps I had wrongfully held back the silver from the poor. This man was evidently poor.

MME. MAGLOIRE. But, good gracious me ! With what will Monseigneur eat now ?

THE BISHOP. Are there no pewter forks to be had ?

MME. MAGLOIRE (*deprecatingly*). But, Monseigneur, pewter smells.

THE BISHOP (*smiling*). Iron, then.

MME. MAGLOIRE. Iron tastes.

THE BISHOP. Very well, then, wood.

MME. MAGLOIRE (*resignedly*). Eh bien, I suppose Monseigneur will have it his own way. Mon Dieu, but we must be thankful that the villain only stole, and that we were not murdered in our beds.

(Footsteps are heard in the garden followed by a loud knock on the door.)

MME. MAGLOIRE. Ah ! what is that ?

MDLLE. BAPTISTINE (peeping through the window).

It is the police.

THE BISHOP. Go now, please, both of you and leave me.

Exeunt MME. MAGLOIRE and MDLLE. BAPTISTINE.

THE BISHOP. Enter.

(The door is thrown open and enter a Sergeant of the Gendarmes. He carries in his hand the knapsack. He is followed by two other gendarmes, who hold between them JEAN VALJEAN.)

THE SERGEANT (saluting). Monseigneur !

JEAN (in a crushed, stupefied manner). Monseigneur ! Then he is not the Curé.

THE SERGEANT. Be silent, dog. This is Monseigneur, the Bishop. (To the BISHOP.) Do you know this man, Monseigneur ?

THE BISHOP (who has been standing wrapped in deep thought). I do. (He advances towards JEAN.) I am very glad to see you back again, my son. Why did you not take away the candlesticks which I gave you, which are of silver, and which will fetch 200 francs ?

(JEAN VALJEAN stares at him with a dazed expression.)

THE SERGEANT. Then, Monseigneur, can it be that what this man told us was true ? We met him running away from your house, so we arrested him. He had this plate in his knapsack and he—

THE BISHOP. And he told you that it had been given him by an old priest. I see it all. And so, as you did not believe him, you brought him back here. But you have made a mistake.

THE SERGEANT. Then in that case we can let him go ?

THE BISHOP. Certainly.

THE SERGEANT (*to his men*). Release the prisoner.

(*The Gendarmes let go their hold of JEAN VALJEAN, who totters forward and is only saved from falling by the BISHOP.*)

JEAN (*in a low voice*). Am I then free ?

THE SERGEANT. Yes, don't you understand ?

THE BISHOP. Gentlemen, you may retire.

(*The Sergeant hands the knapsack to JEAN VALJEAN.*)

THE SERGEANT (*saluting the BISHOP*). Monseigneur ! (*He turns to his men.*) March.

Exeunt Sergeant and Gendarmes.

(*The BISHOP walks slowly to the sideboard, and taking up the candlesticks, holds them out to JEAN VALJEAN.*)

THE BISHOP. My friend, take your candlesticks.

(*He takes them mechanically*).

THE BISHOP. And now go in peace, but first promise me to employ this money in becoming an honest man.

JEAN (*in a broken voice*). I promise.

THE BISHOP (*earnestly*). Jean Valjean, my brother, remember that from this hour forth you no longer belong to evil but to good. I have bought your soul of you. I give it now to God.

(*JEAN VALJEAN stands a moment silent, then overcome with intense emotion, gives an inarticulate cry, seizes the BISHOP's hand, kisses it, and rushes out through the open door.*)

CURTAIN.

A TULLIVER TEA-PARTY

GEORGE ELIOT (*The Mill on the Floss*)

CHARACTERS

MR TULLIVER, *a stout man of medium height. About fifty years old.*

MRS TULLIVER, *his wife, a blonde, comely woman. She has rather a timid, retiring, apologetic manner, especially when conversing with Mrs Glegg.*

MRS GLEGG, *her sister, a tall, handsome woman of commanding presence and domineering manner. She is some fifty years of age.*

MRS PULLET, *a tall, good-looking woman and very smartly dressed in a handsome silk dress.*

MR PULLET, *her husband, a small man, with small twinkling eyes, thin lips, and a high nose.*

KEZIA, *a maid-servant.*

PERIOD . . . 1830

SCENE.—*The sitting-room at the TULLIVER'S. It is furnished in the heavy ugly fashion, common to the earlier part of the nineteenth century. There is a small window at back and a door R. Above the fireplace L. is a chimney-piece upon which are a number of ornaments and a clock which ticks loudly. There is a round table C. partly set*

for tea, about which uncomfortable-looking chairs are placed. When the curtain rises MRS TULLIVER is discovered seated in an armchair before the fire-place. Her eyes are closed, and she gives the impression that she is about to snatch a surreptitious forty winks. MRS GLEGG is also discovered, seated stiffly upon a sofa R. C.

MRS GLEGG (*sharply*). What is the time, Sister Tulliver?

MRS TULLIVER (*opening her eyes with a start and glancing at the clock*). I think it is about twelve after four.

MRS GLEGG (*pulling out and consulting a large gold watch*). Well, I don't know about your clock, but by my watch it has gone the half-hour.

MRS TULLIVER (*mildly*). Has it indeed, sister?

MRS GLEGG. I don't know what ails our Sister Pullet, I'm sure I don't. It used to be the way in our family for one to be as early as the other, and not for one sister to sit for half an hour before the other came. In my poor father's time she used to be more like me. If you'll take my advice, Bessy, you'll put the tea forrad a bit, sooner than back, because folks are late as ought to know better.

MRS TULLIVER. Oh, dear, there's no fear but what they'll all be here in time, Jane. And the tea won't be ready till the half hour.

(MRS GLEGG *snorts her disapproval*.)

MRS TULLIVER. But if it's too long for you to wait, let me fetch you a cheese cake and a glass o' wine.

MRS GLEGG. Well, Bessy, I should ha' thought you'd

known your own sister better. I never eat between meals and I'm not going to begin. Not but what I hate this nonsense of having your tea at half past four when you might have it at four.

MRS TULLIVER (*in a plaintively peevish voice*). Well, Jane, what can I do? Mr Tulliver doesn't like his tea before five o'clock but I put it half an hour earlier because of you.

MRS GLEGG. Yes, yes, I know how it is with husbands—they're for putting off everything—they'll put the tea off till after supper if they've wives as are weak enough to give in to such work; it's a pity for you, Bessy, as you haven't more strength of mind, an' it's a pity for your children's sake too. I hope they don't live to suffer. (*She pauses but Mrs TULLIVER vouchsafes no reply.*) I hope, sister, you've not gone and got a great tea for us—going to expense for your sisters as 'ud sooner eat a crust o' dry bread nor help to ruin you with extravagance.

MRS TULLIVER (*dolefully*). Well, I'm sure, sister, Mr Tulliver has a right to have a good tea in his own house if he likes to pay for it.

MRS GLEGG. Very well, Bessy, we'll say no more about it, but, remember, I can't leave your children enough out o' my savings to keep 'em from ruin.

(*The sound of a carriage drawing up outside is heard.*)

MRS TULLIVER (*rising with relief at the interruption*). That must be Sister Pullet; it was a four-wheel.

MRS GLEGG (*with a sniff of disapprobation*). Four-wheel, indeed—sinful waste, I call it!

MRS TULLIVER (*looking sideways through the window*).

Yes, it is her. Why, whatever can be the matter ? She's a-crying like anything.

Enter MRS PULLET. She holds a handkerchief before her eyes and is shedding tears profusely.

MRS TULLIVER. Why, whatever is wrong, sister ?

(MRS PULLET only sobs.)

MRS TULLIVER. Why, you don't mean as that girl's broke the best bedroom looking-glass again ?

MRS PULLET. No, no !

MRS TULLIVER (*in a tone of relief*). Well, that's a mercy any way.

MRS GLEGG (*snappily*). Well, something's the matter, I suppose.

MRS PULLET (*blowing her nose and drying her eyes*). She's gone ! (*She sits down lifting up her mantle carefully before doing so.*)

MRS GLEGG. Gone ! Who's gone ?

MRS PULLET (*unheeding her and continuing her news in doleful tones and with a lachrymose accompaniment*). Died only yesterday an' with legs as thick as my body. They'd tapped her no end o' times, and the water—you could ha' swum in it—if you'd wanted to.

MRS GLEGG (*with a snort indicating her disapproval of the manner of the demise*). Well, Sophy, I can't think who you're talking of, but it seems to me it's a mercy she's gone, whoever she may be.

MRS PULLET (*ruminating gloomily and shaking her head*). There wasn't such another dropsy in the parish.

MRS GLEGG (*a light breaking in upon her*). Oh, you mean old Mrs Sutton, o' Twentylands ?

(MRS PULLET nods her head.)

MRS GLEGG (*indignantly*). Well, and she's no kin nor much acquaintance neither as I've ever heard of.

MRS PULLET (*with hurt surprise*). She was so much acquaintance as I've seen her legs when they was like bladders.

MRS TULLIVER. An' they say she took as much physic as 'ud fill a waggon.

MRS PULLET. Ah, she had another complaint iver so many years before she had the dropsy, an' the doctors couldn't make out what it was. "Mrs Pullet," she said to me, only last Christmas, "Mrs Pullet, if iver you have the dropsy you'll think o' me." Those were her very words, and she's to be buried o' Saturday, an' Pullet's bid to the funeral. (*She relapses again into sobbing.*)

MRS GLEGG (*rising with great indignation*). Sophy, I wonder at you, fretting and injuring your health about people as don't belong to you. Your poor father niver did so, nor your Aunt Frances neither, nor any of the family as I iver heard of. Why, you couldn't fret no more than this, if we heard as our cousin Abbott had died sudden without making his will.

Enter MR TULLIVER and MR GLEGG.

TULLIVER (*rubbing his hands*). Well, here we are, my dears. I met Neighbour Glegg on the doorstep. Well, sisters-in-law, and how do you find yourselves?

MRS GLEGG. Thank you, Tulliver, I am well enough, though I am sorry I can't say the same for Sophy.

(MRS PULLET *sniffs*.)

TULLIVER. Why, what's the matter with her?

MRS GLEGG. You may well ask, Tulliver. There she

has been sitting for the last half hour sniffing and fretting for a body that was neither kith nor kin.

Enter KEZIA with tea tray, which she sets upon the table.

TULLIVER. Well, well, I dare say a cup o' tea 'ull soon put her right.

(*At the sight of the tea, they all, even MRS PULLET, visibly brighten.*)

TULLIVER. Come along all o' ye.

(*They all take their places at the table, MRS TULLIVER presiding over the tea-pot.*)

TULLIVER. Well, Kezia, where are the children ?

KEZIA. If ye plaize, sir, they've gone a' fishing.

Exit KEZIA.

MRS GLEGG. Fishin' indeed ! With their aunts and uncle coming to tea. That was not the way when I was young.

TULLIVER (*rather testily*). Well, well, times have changed since then, sister-in-law, an' after all, there's no harm in fishin', is there ?

(MRS GLEGG snorts.)

TULLIVER. And they're good children.

MRS GLEGG. I hope they are.

MRS PULLET (*shaking her head and relapsing into a deep melancholy*). I doubt he'll outgrow his strength.

(To MRS TULLIVER.) Don't you think so, sister ?

MRS TULLIVER (*nervously*). I can't say, I'm sure, sister.

TULLIVER. Nonsense, nonsense, the boy's well enough. I've got a piece o' news, though, about him that will surprise you all.

MRS PULLET. Oh, dear, I do hope he's not been getting into any trouble.

TULLIVER. Nay, nay, not that I know of. Now I've just come from seeing Mr Stelling, the parson at King's Lorton.

(MRS GLEGG snorts and mutters to MRS TULLIVER,
"So that's why he was late for tea.")

TULLIVER. He's an uncommon clever fellow is Mr Stelling, and I've managed to send Tom to him.

(An amazed silence falls on the company as MR TULLIVER glances round to see how his news is received.)

GLEGG (*scratching his head*). You'll have to pay a swinging half-year bill for that, eh, Tulliver ?

TULLIVER. Ay, ay, a cool hundred, but there, eddication is an expensive thing.

GLEGG. But will this parson be able to teach Tom to know a good sample o' wheat when he sees it ?

MRS GLEGG. Well, if I may be allowed to speak, an' it's seldom I am, I should like to know what good is to come to the boy by being brought up above his fortin'.

TULLIVER (*becoming rather nettled*). I've made up my mind not to bring Tom up to my own business. I want to give him an eddication as he'll be even wi' lawyers and folks. Tom's eddication 'ull be so much capital to him.

GLEGG. Ay, there's something in that.

"When land is gone and money's spent
Then learning is most excellent."

Ha ! Ha !

MRS GLEGG. Mr Glegg, I wonder at you making jokes when you see your own kin going headlong to ruin.

TULLIVER (*angrily*). If you mean me by that, you

needn't fret. I can manage my own affairs without troubling other folks.

GLEGG. But Neighbour Tulliver, what can you be sending him to a parson for ?

TULLIVER. Because parsons are the best school-masters by what I can make out, and besides, Wakem, the lawyer, told me he was going to send his son along to him.

MRS PULLET (*in a funereal voice*). But Wakem's son's got a hump back, so it's more natural to send him to a clergyman.

MRS GLEGG. You'd better hold your tongue, sister, far better. Mr Tulliver doesn't want your opinion, nor mine neither. There's folks in the world as know better than any one else.

TULLIVER. I should think that was you, if we're to trust your own tale.

MRS GLEGG. Oh, I say nothing. My advice has never been asked and I don't give it.

TULLIVER. It'll be the first time, then. It's the only thing you're over-ready at giving.

MRS GLEGG. I've been over-ready at lending then, if I haven't been over-ready at giving. Perhaps I shall repent o' lending money to kin.

TULLIVER. Well, you've got a bond for your money, haven't you ? And you've had your five per cent. kin or no kin.

MRS TULLIVER (*plaintively*). Sister, do drink your tea and let me give you some almonds and raisins.

MRS GLEGG. Bessy, I am sorry for you. It's poor work talking o' almonds and raisins.

MRS PULLET (*beginning to weep a little*). Lor, sister, don't be so quarrelsome. You may be struck wi' a fit, and we are but just out o' mourning, all o' us.

MRS GLEGG. Things are come to a fine pass when one sister invites the other to her house o' purpose to quarrel with her and abuse her.

MRS TULLIVER. Oh dear, oh dear.

TULLIVER (*dashing his fist upon the table*). Who wants to quarrel wi' you. It's you as can't let people alone. I should never want to quarrel with any woman if she kept her place.

MRS GLEGG. My place, indeed. Let me tell you, Mr Tulliver, there's your betters as are dead and in their graves, treated me with a different sort o' respect to what you do, though I have got a husband as 'll sit by and see me abused by them as 'ud never ha' had the chance if there hadn't been them in our family as married worse than they might ha' done.

TULLIVER. My family's as good as yours any day, ay, and better, for it hasn't got a damned ill-tempered woman in it.

MRS GLEGG (*rising and drawing her shawl more closely about her*). Not one minute longer do I stay in this house. You may think it a fine thing, Mr Glegg, to sit by and hear me swore at, but I am going home. (*She stalks out of the room.*)

GLEGG (*rising unhappily and shaking his head*). Dear, dear, she's a difficult woman. (*He follows his wife out.*)

MRS TULLIVER. Oh, Mr Tulliver, how could you talk so? Do go after her.

TULLIVER. No, let her go and the sooner the better. She won't be trying to domineer over me again in a hurry. (*Seizing his cup and assuming the air of a man who has burnt his boats.*) Here, give me another cup o' tea.

CURTAIN.

THE REHEARSAL

DICKENS (*Nicholas Nickleby*)

CHARACTERS

NICHOLAS NICKLEBY, *a tall, slight, well-formed young man, with a bright, intelligent face.*

SMIKE, *very tall and lamentably thin.*

MR CRUMMLES, *an extremely stout man with very close shaved hair and a hoarse voice.*

MRS CRUMMLES, *a stout, portly lady, between forty and fifty years of age. Her hair is braided in large festoons over her ears. She has all the manner of a tragedy queen.*

THE INFANT PHENOMENON, *Miss Crummles, a small, under-developed child of fourteen or fifteen years of age. She wears a dirty white frock, short trousers, sandalled shoes, pink gauze bonnet, and curl papers.*

MR LENVILLE
MR FOLAIR
MISS SNEVELLICCI } *of Mr Crummles' Company.*

Actors, Actresses, Scene-shifters, etc.

PERIOD . . . About 1830.

SCENE.—*The stage of the Portsmouth Theatre. It is an ill-lit, depressing place with a general air of dirt and gloom about it. Several dusty pieces of scenery are leaning against the bare and mildewy walls, and some*

dilapidated bits of furniture and pots of paint are set about the stage. At the back C. is a rickety table, and behind it are two equally rickety chairs. NICHOLAS NICKLEBY and SMIKE are discovered rehearsing. NICHOLAS holds a book in one hand.

NICHOLAS. Now, then, old fellow, once again, "Who calls so loud?"

SMIKE (*uncertainly*). "Who calls so loud?"

NICHOLAS. Well said. Now again "Who calls so loud?"

SMIKE (*more confidently*). "Who calls so loud? Who calls so loud?"

Enter MR and MRS VINCENT CRUMMLES.

MR CRUMMLES. Bravo, bravo! Capital, my dear Mr Digby. I'll swear you'll make a very prince and prodigy of Apothecaries. And now, Mr Johnson (*he turns to NICHOLAS*), let me introduce to you my wife, Mrs Vincent Crummles.

MRS CRUMMLES (*in a sepulchral voice*). Sir, I am glad to see you, and more happy to hail you as a promising member of our corps. (*She honours NICHOLAS with an iron grip.*)

NICHOLAS (*wincing*). I—I am delighted to make the acquaintance of one so famous as Mrs Vincent Crummles.

(*MRS CRUMMLES smiles with becoming satisfaction, and then turns dramatically round upon SMIKE, who is still murmuring the line "Who calls so loud?" and who now involuntarily repeats it in a startled tone of voice at being so suddenly addressed.*)

MRS CRUMMLES. And this, this is the other. (*She extends her hand to him.*) You too are welcome, sir.

MR CRUMMLES (*taking snuff*). He'll do, I think, my dear.

MRS CRUMMLES (*surveying SMIKE with great admiration*). He is admirable, a great acquisition.

(*She again shakes SMIKE fervently by the hand and returns to NICHOLAS.*)

MRS CRUMMLES. And so, Mr Johnson, you have decided to adopt the stage as your profession, and Portsmouth will see your first appearance?

NICHOLAS. Yes (*pause*). Are they very theatrical people here?

MRS CRUMMLES. Not at all. Far from it.

NICHOLAS. Indeed, you surprise me.

MR CRUMMLES. I pity them. Why, do you know, sir, the last time we appeared, an occasion when Mrs Crummles repeated three of her most popular characters, there was a house of no more than four pound twelve.

MRS CRUMMLES. Yes, Mr Johnson, and two pound ten of that was on trust.

NICHOLAS. Is it possible?

(*MRS CRUMMLES casts her eyes heavenwards.*)

NICHOLAS. Do you give lessons, ma'am?

MRS CRUMMLES. I do.

NICHOLAS. There is no teaching here, I suppose?

MRS CRUMMLES. I have on occasions received pupils even here. I imparted tuition once to the daughter of a dealer in ship's provisions; but it afterwards appeared that she was insane when she came to me. It was very extraordinary that she should come, under such circumstances.

(*NICHOLAS is about to make a remark, but thinks perhaps he had better hold his peace. A wild shriek is heard off, and the INFANT PHENOMENON bounds upon the*

stage. She is evidently in the throes of a rehearsal. She turns a pirouette, looks off, shrieks, bounds forward and falls into a beautiful attitude denoting extreme terror as a shabby gentleman, MR FOLAIR, comes on at one powerful slide, chattering his teeth and fiercely brandishing his walking-stick.)

NICHOLAS. Why, bless us, what's the matter ?

MRS CRUMMLES. Hush, they are going through the " Indian Savage and the Maiden."

(The savage having become more ferocious advances with a slide towards the maiden, who avoids him in six twirls and comes down at the last one, upon the very points of her toes. This seems to make an impression upon the savage, who, after chasing the maiden into a few more corners, begins to relent, and strokes his face several times with his right thumb and four fingers, and intimates his admiration of the maiden's beauty by striking severe thumps upon his chest. The maiden then proceeds to fall asleep. The savage perceiving this, leans his left ear in his left hand, nods sideways, to intimate to all that she is asleep. He then proceeds to have a dance all to himself. As soon as he leaves off the maiden awakes, rubs her eyes, jumps up and has a dance all to herself. The savage then rushes forward and they dance violently together, and finally the savage drops upon one knee, and the maiden stands upon one leg upon his other knee.)

MR CRUMMLES. Bravo ! Well done, indeed. (To NICHOLAS.) Well, sir, what do you think of that ?

NICHOLAS (trying to be enthusiastic). Beautiful ! Beautiful !

MR CRUMMLES. I see, Mr Johnson, you are a man

of taste. (*To the INFANT PHENOMENON.*) My child, approach. (*She does so.*) This, sir, this is the Infant Phenomenon—Miss Ninetta Crummles.

NICHOLAS. Your daughter?

MR CRUMMLES. My daughter, sir, my daughter. (*With growing enthusiasm.*) The idol of every place we go into, sir. We have had complimentary letters about this child, sir, from the nobility and gentry of almost every town in England.

NICHOLAS. I am not surprised. She must be quite a natural genius.

MR CRUMMLES. I tell you what, sir. The talent of this child is not to be imagined. She must be seen—seen—to be even faintly appreciated. There, go to your mother, my dear.

(*The INFANT PHENOMENON joins MRS CRUMMLES, who has pressed SMIKE into the service of holding her part while she is repeating the lines in vigorous undertones. During the foregoing dialogue MR FOLAIR, the Indian savage, has been regarding the INFANT PHENOMENON with a particularly venomous expression. As she crosses to her mother he approaches NICHOLAS and MR CRUMMLES.*)

MR FOLAIR (*to NICHOLAS, and signifying that he is referring to the INFANT PHENOMENON.*) Talent there, sir, eh?

NICHOLAS (*politely*). Yes, indeed.

MR FOLAIR (*uttering a hissing sound and speaking with intense ferocity.*) She oughtn't to be in the provinces, she oughtn't.

MR CRUMMLES. What do you mean?

MR FOLAIR (*pulling himself up and swallowing his rage.*) I mean to say she is too good for country

boards. She ought to be in London or nowhere—and she would be if it wasn't for envy and jealousy in a quarter we know of. Ha! Ha! Perhaps you'll introduce me here, Mr Crummles.

MR CRUMMLES. Mr Johnson, this is Mr Folair.

MR FOLAIR (*touching the brim of his hat*). Happy to know you, sir.

MRS CRUMMLES. Vincent, my dear.

MR CRUMMLES. My love.

MRS CRUMMLES. I desire a word with you.

MR CRUMMLES. My love, I am yours to command.

(*He crosses to Mrs Crummles and engages in earnest conversation with her. Exeunt Mr, Mrs, and Miss Crummles.*)

MR FOLAIR (*looking out after them*). Did ever you see such a set out as that?

NICHOLAS. As what? (MR FOLAIR looks at him in some surprise.) You don't mean the Infant Phenomenon?

MR FOLAIR (*ferociously*). Infant humbug, sir. Why, there isn't a female child of common sharpness in a charity school that couldn't do better than she does, and yet, that little sprawler is put up in the best business every night, and is actually keeping money out of the house, by being forced down people's throats, while other people are being passed over. Why, sir, let me tell you, I know of fifteen and sixpence, fifteen and sixpence, sir, that came to Southampton one night last month to see me dance the Highland Fling, and what's the consequence? I've not been up in it once since, never once—while the Infant Phenomenon has been grinning through artificial flowers at five people and a baby in the pit and two boys in the gallery every

night. Bah, it's extraordinary to see a man's confounded family conceit blinding him, even to his own family interest. (*He beats his slippers which he is holding in hands together.*)

Enter MR LENVILLE.

MR LENVILLE. Hola, hola, house there ! Ah, Tommy. (*He throws himself into a fencing attitude and makes a thrust at MR FOLAIR with his walking-stick, who parries it dexterously with his slipper.*) Well, and what's the news ?

MR FOLAIR. Oh, a new appearance, that's all.

MR LENVILLE (*tapping him playfully on the hat*). Come, Tommy, do the honours.

MR FOLAIR. This is Mr Lenville, who does the first tragedy, Mr Johnson.

MR LENVILLE. Ha, Ha ! Except when old "Bricks and Mortar," takes it into his head to do it himself, you should add, Tommy. (*To NICHOLAS.*) You don't know who I mean by "Bricks and Mortar," I suppose, sir ?

NICHOLAS. I do not, indeed.

MR LENVILLE. We call Crummles that because his style of acting is rather in the heavy and ponderous way. Ha, ha ! But, tut, tut, I mustn't be cracking jokes here when I've a part of twelve lengths, which I must be up in to-morrow night.

(*He withdraws himself, and, taking a greasy, crumpled manuscript from his pocket, proceeds to walk to and fro at the back of the stage, conning to himself and occasionally indulging in such appropriate gestures as his imagination and the text suggest. MR FOLAIR meanwhile seizes the opportunity of a brief rest, and seats himself upon a chair and falls into a dozing*

condition. NICHOLAS is about to exit when MISS SNEVELICCI enters very quickly, and they almost collide.)

MISS SNEVELICCI. Oh ! (looking up and seeing before her a stranger) Oh !

NICHOLAS. I beg your pardon.

MISS SNEVELICCI (*with befitting confusion*). Not at all. I—I was looking for Mr Crummles. I—I expect he will be here in a moment.

NICHOLAS. No doubt.

(*There is a pause.*)

MISS SNEVELICCI (*after throwing many glances in Nicholas's direction*). I beg your pardon, but did you ever play at Canterbury ?

NICHOLAS. No, I never did.

MISS SNEVELICCI. I recollect meeting a gentleman at Canterbury once, only for a few moments, so like you that I felt certain it was the same.

NICHOLAS. I am sure I never saw you before. Indeed, if I had I couldn't have forgotten it.

MISS SNEVELICCI (*with becoming coyness*). Oh—well—I'm sure it's very flattering of you to say so ; and now I come to look at you I see that the gentleman at Canterbury hadn't the same eyes as you. But you'll think me very foolish taking notice of such things.

NICHOLAS. How can I feel otherwise than flattered by your notice in any way ?

MISS SNEVELICCI. Oh, you men are such vain creatures.

NICHOLAS. If we are, it is because you make us so.

MISS SNEVELICCI. Oh, what a creature you are to flatter.

Enter MR and MRS CRUMMLES, followed by SMIKE.

MR CRUMMLES (*in a loud portentous voice*). Ladies and gentlemen, to-morrow at ten we'll call the "Mortal Struggle." Everybody for the procession; we shall only want one rehearsal. Everybody at ten, if you please.

(*The company begin to move away.*)

MR CRUMMLES. Oh, one moment, ladies and gentlemen! I wish to tell you that on Monday we shall read and put into rehearsal a new piece written by our friend, Mr Johnson, here.

NICHOLAS (*with great surprise*). Eh!

MR CRUMMLES. The name's not known yet, but every one will have a good part. Mr Johnson will see to that.

NICHOLAS. Here, I say.

MR CRUMMLES (*ignoring the interruption*). On Monday morning. That will do, ladies and gentlemen. Good morning.

(*The company disperse till only MR and MRS CRUMMLES, NICHOLAS, and SMIKE are left on the stage.*)

NICHOLAS. Upon my soul, Mr Crummles, I don't see how you can possibly expect me to produce a play by Monday morning.

MR CRUMMLES. Pooh, pooh, my dear Johnson, nonsense! You're too modest.

NICHOLAS. But I really can't. You see my invention is not equal to these demands, or possibly I might.

MR CRUMMLES. Invention, sir! And what the devil has invention got to do with it?

NICHOLAS. Why, everything, surely.

MR CRUMMLES (*impatiently*). Nothing at all, my dear sir, nothing! Do you understand French?

NICHOLAS. Yes, perfectly well.

MR CRUMMLES. Very good. (*He crosses to the table and, opening a drawer, takes from it a dirty roll of manuscript.*) There, you see that ?

NICHOLAS. Yes, but——

MR CRUMMLES. Well, take it, my dear boy. (NICHOLAS *does so.*) There's your play ready-made. All you have to do is to turn it into English and put your name on the title page.

NICHOLAS (*rather relieved*). Oh, I see !

MR CRUMMLES (*turning abruptly on MRS CRUMMLES*). Now, my dear, are you ready ?

MRS CRUMMLES. Yes, Vincent, I am. But stay, will Mr Johnson and Mr Digby honour us with their company at dinner to-day ?

MR CRUMMLES. Certainly, certainly ! And we talk over that play of yours afterwards.

NICHOLAS. You are very good.

MRS CRUMMLES (*still in her sepulchral voice*). We have but shoulder of mutton with onion sauce, but such as it is you will be welcome. Come, Vincent.

MR CRUMMLES. Good-bye, Johnson, three o'clock, and don't forget the address. St Thomas's Street ; the house with the boat-green door. Mr Digby, good-bye.

Exeunt MR and MRS CRUMMLES, who stalk out with massive dignity. NICHOLAS looks after them with a smile. He then turns to SMIKE, who looks lovingly at him.

NICHOLAS. Well, Smike, we have fallen upon strange times, and Heaven knows what will be the end of them ! I wonder ! I wonder ! (*He sighs.*) But come, we must not waste our time, and you still have that

Apothecary's part to learn. Give me that book again.
(SMIKE does so.) Now then, once more. "Who calls
so loud?"

SMIKE. "Who calls so loud?"

(THEY GO ON REPEATING THE LINE AS THE
CURTAIN FALLS.)

A CRANFORD CARD PARTY

MRS GASKELL (*Cranford*)

CHARACTERS

THE HON. MRS JAMIESON.

MISS MATILDA JENKYNNS.

MRS FORRESTER.

MISS POLE.

MISS BETTY BARKER, *a retired milliner.*

PEGGY, *Miss Barker's maid-servant.*

CARLO, *a small dog.*

PERIOD . . . About 1831.

SCENE.—*Parlour at Miss BETTY BARKER'S. Door R. Window B. Fireplace L. A card table upon which are cards and candlesticks L.C. A large easy chair is placed C., and near it another chair, not so large and not so comfortable. A sofa R.*

When the curtain rises Miss BETTY BARKER and PEGGY are discovered lighting the candles upon the card table and the chimney piece. A knock is heard off. PEGGY crosses to door R.

MISS BARKER. Wait, Peggy, wait, while I arrange these cushions. When I cough, open the front door. I'll not be a minute.

Exit PEGGY.

(MISS BARKER takes a cushion from sofa R, and deposits it upon the chair of honour C. She then surveys her handiwork critically and coughs loudly, "a sound between a sneeze and a crow.")

Enter PEGGY.

PEGGY. Miss Matilda Jenkyns.

Exit.

Enter MISS MATTY.

MISS BARKER. Ah, this is indeed a great honour you are paying me, madam. Will you please to be seated, madam? There, if you please.

(She signifies the sofa, standing the while in front of the chair of honour C., and displaying some uneasiness lest MISS MATTY should wish to appropriate it.)

MISS MATTY. Mrs Jamieson is coming, I think you said.

MISS BARKER. Yes. Mrs Jamieson has most kindly and condescendingly said she would be happy to come. Mrs Jamieson dines at five, and has kindly promised not to delay her visit beyond half past six. She made one little stipulation, however, and that was that she should bring Carlo. I told her if I had a weakness it was for dogs.

MISS MATTY. Oh, yes. And Miss Pole is to be one of the party, I believe.

MISS BARKER (*with deprecation*). Yes, Miss Pole is coming. Of course I could not think of asking her until I had asked you, madam, the rector's daughter, madam. Believe me, I do not forget the situation my father held under yours.

MISS MATTY. And Mrs Forrester, of course?

MISS BARKER. And Mrs Forrester. Although her

circumstances are changed, madam, she was born a Tyrell, and we can never forget the alliance with the Biggs of Bigelow Hall.

MISS MATTY. And also she plays a very good game of cards.

MISS BARKER. So I believe, madam.

MISS MATTY. Mrs Fitz-Adam—I suppose——

MISS BARKER (*decisively*). No, madam, no. I had to draw the line somewhere. Mrs Jamieson would not, I think, like to meet Mrs Fitz-Adam. I have the greatest respect for Mrs Fitz-Adam, but I cannot think her fit society for such ladies as the Honourable Mrs Jamieson and Miss Matilda Jenkyns. Although, madam, I am a retired milliner, I am not a democrat, and if you will allow me to say so, I do understand the difference of ranks.

Enter PEGGY.

PEGGY. Miss Pole and Mrs Forrester.

Exit.

Enter Miss POLE and MRS FORRESTER.

MISS POLE (*in the doorway*). After you, ma'am.

(MISS BARKER *rises and hastens forward to greet the newcomers*).

MISS BARKER. I am indeed flattered, ladies, to welcome you to my little dwelling. Miss Pole, I beg you to be seated next to Miss Matty. Mrs Forrester, I trust you will find this chair to your liking. This (*she signifies the place of honour*) I am keeping for the Honourable Mrs Jamieson.

(*She conducts MRS FORRESTER to the second place of honour—a seat arranged something like Prince Albert's, near Queen Victoria's—good, but not so good.*)

Enter PEGGY. She stands in the doorway making violent signs to MISS BARKER, who at first attempts to ignore them, but eventually crosses over to her.

MISS BARKER. Well, Peggy, what is it?

PEGGY. If you please, miss, I've seen Mrs Jamieson's sedan-chair a-comin' down the street. (*There is a loud knock heard.*)

MISS BARKER. Very well, Peggy, I'll come. (*Exit PEGGY.*) Ladies, I beg you to excuse me for one moment. (*She drops them all a swimming curtsey and exit.*)

MISS POLE. Miss Betty told me it was to be a choice and select few.

MRS FORRESTER. Yes, not even Mrs Fitz-Adam.

MISS POLE. I should think not, indeed. I do not know who Mr Fitz-Adam was, but I do know that Mrs Fitz-Adam appeared in Cranford very soon after his death, a well-to-do widow in rustling black silk.

MISS MATTY (*reflectively*). Yes, perhaps, bombazine would have shown a deeper sense of her loss.

MRS FORRESTER. I have always understood that Fitz meant something aristocratic. There was Fitz-Roy—I believe some of the king's children have been called that. Then there is Fitz-Clarence—the children of dear good King William are called that. Fitz-Adam! it is a pretty name, and probably means "child of Adam." I am sure no one who had not some good blood in their veins would dare to be called Fitz. There is a great deal in a name. I had a cousin who spells his same with two little "f's"—ffoulkes, and he always looked down upon capital letters. He said they belonged to lately invented families. I was afraid he would die a bachelor, he was so very choice. However, when he met with a Mrs ffarringdon, two little "f's" at a watering place, he took to her immediately,

and a very pretty, genteel woman she was—a widow, with a good fortune, and my cousin, Mr ffoulkes, married her, and it was all owing to the two little f's.

(*There is a sound of some heavily-built person ascending the stairs, accompanied by sounds of a puffing and panting character.*)

MISS POLE. That must be Mrs Jamieson.

(*The door is thrown open and MISS BARKER enters.*)

MISS BARKER. Ladies, Mrs Jamieson.

Enter MRS JAMIESON, carrying Carlo. She greets the company with as much of stately dignity as her figure will allow.

MISS BARKER. I have reserved this chair for you—I pray you to be seated.

(MRS JAMIESON does so.)

MISS BARKER (*patting Carlo*). Oh, ze poor itte doggie. It shall soon have its tea, it shall.

Enter PEGGY, bearing a heavy tea-tray, loaded with many good things.

MISS BARKER. Ladies, Mrs Jamieson, a cup of tea, I beg.

(PEGGY hands round the tea-tray, MISS BARKER busily fussing round her the while.)

MRS JAMIESON. I am told that a number of very bad-looking men have been seen lurking around Cranford lately.

MISS POLE. Oh yes, two very bad looking men have gone three times past my house, very slowly; and an Irish beggar woman all but forced her way in past Betty, saying her children were starving and that she must see the mistress. You see, she said "mistress," though

there was a man's hat hanging up in the hall, and it would have been more natural to have said "master." But Betty shut the door in her face, and came to me, and we got the spoons together, and sat in the parlour window watching till we saw Thomas Jones going from his work, and we called to him and asked him to take care of us into the town, and we went straight to Miss Matty's and told her there was a plan to rob our house, and asked her if we might stay the night with her. Did we not, Miss Matty? *(She pauses for breath.)*

MISS MATTY. Yes, indeed.

MRS JAMESON. Then I believe they must have tried to attack my house, for there were footprints on the flower-beds underneath the kitchen window, and Carlo barked all through the night. I expect he frightened them away. Good doggie.

MISS BARKER. Oh, it's dreadful, dreadful. We shall all be murdered in our beds next.

MRS FORRESTER. Yes. Then I am told that Mr Hoggins was robbed at his very own door, in the interval between his ringing his bell and his servant's answering it.

(General amazement, except on the part of Miss Pole, who shows considerable pique at any one besides herself having dared to have had adventures, and snorts audibly.)

MISS POLE. After all, Mr Hoggins is too much of a man to own that he was robbed last night.

ALL. What, not robbed?

MISS POLE. Don't tell me. I, for one, believe he was robbed, and that he is ashamed to own it, for, to be sure, it was very silly of him to be robbed just at his own door. I daresay he feels that such a thing won't raise him in the eyes of Cranford society, and is anxious to conceal it,

but he need not have tried to impose upon me by saying I must have heard an exaggerated account of some petty theft of a neck of mutton, which, it seems, was stolen out of the safe in his yard last week. He had the impertinence to add that he believed it was taken by the cat. I have no doubt that it was that Irishman dressed up in woman's clothes who came spying about my house, with the story of starving children.

(*During the foregoing, MRS JAMIESON, having finished her tea and several large pieces of seed cake, has been gradually dropping off to sleep.*)

MISS BARKER (*rising*). Shall we have a game of cards, ladies ?

ALL (*eagerly*). By all means—certainly.

MISS BARKER. Will Mrs Jamieson—oh !

(*She perceives MRS JAMIESON's somnolent attitude and tip-toes towards her. MRS JAMIESON gives a loud snore.*)

MISS BARKER (*in a hushed whisper*). Ladies, I think Mrs Jamieson is asleep. Well, I am sure I shall be delighted to take a hand, although I declare I do not know spadille from manille. (*They all seat themselves at the card table.*) It is very gratifying to me to see how completely Mrs Jamieson feels at home in my poor little dwelling. She could not have paid me a greater compliment. Will you deal, Miss Pole ?

MISS POLE. With pleasure, ma'am.

(*She does so, and they all take up their hands and begin the game.*)

MRS FORESTER. I declare all these stories about the ruffians who tried to rob Miss Pole and Mrs Jamieson have made me feel quite creepy, though I, for my part, feel more secure since I have borrowed a boy from one

of the neighbouring cottages, and promised his parents a hundredweight of coals for the loan of him at nights. Finding him sensible I have given him my late husband's sword, desiring him to put it very carefully behind his pillow at nights, turning the edge toward the head of the pillow. He is a sharp lad, for, on spying my husband's cocked hat, he asked if he might have that to wear, as he was sure if he had he could frighten two Englishmen and four Frenchmen any day. But I impressed him that he was to lose no time putting on hats, or anything else, but if he heard a noise he was to rush at it with his drawn sword. My maid, Jenny, suggested that he might rush on her when she was getting up to wash and spit her before he had time to discover she was not a Frenchman. I told her, however, I did not think that likely, for he is such a very sound sleeper, and generally has to be well shaken or cold pegged in the mornings before we can rouse him.

(*They play a few moments in silence, and finish a hand accompanied by the snores of MRS JAMIESON. At the conclusion of the hand they all burst into conversation except MISS BARKER, who in a shocked undertone says, "Ladies, ladies, MRS JAMIESON is asleep."*)

MISS MATTY (*dealing the cards afresh*). Well, I will own that ever since I was a girl I have dreaded being caught by my last leg as I am getting into bed, by some one concealed underneath it. When I was younger and more active I used to take a flying leap from a distance, and so bring both legs up safely into bed at once, but now I have bought a penny ball, and I roll it under my bed every night. If it comes out the other side, well and good; if not, I always take care to have my hand on

the bell-rope, ready to call out John and Henry just as if I expected men-servants to answer my ring.

MISS BARKER. Most ingenious, I am sure, madam.

(*Another short pause as they play the hand out. The door flies open, and PEGGY, carrying a tray with bottle and glasses, appears. MRS JAMIESON awakes with a start. MISS BARKER rises.*)

MRS JAMIESON. I have been so interested in listening to your amusing and interesting conversation and the room was so light that I was glad to keep my eyes closed, but what is this, Miss Barker ?

MISS BARKER (*who has filled a glass from the bottle and stands before MRS JAMIESON offering it with an ingratiating manner.*) It's cherry brandy. Just a leetle glass, Mrs Jamieson, allow me.

(MRS JAMIESON *takes it doubtfully, and, finding it good, drinks it with zest.*)

MISS BARKER (*taking another glass from PEGGY'S tray and offering it to MISS POLE, who shakes her head vigorously.*) Oh, please, just a tiny drop.

MISS POLE. Well, to please you. (*She tastes it and simulates a terrible coughing noise.*) It's very strong ; I do believe there's spirit in it.

MISS BARKER (*supplying MISS MATTY and MRS FORRESTER*). Only a little drop—just enough to make it keep. You know we put brandy paper over the preserves to make them keep. I declare I often feel quite tipsy myself from eating damson tart.

(*They all drink their cherry brandy with great enjoyment.*)

MRS JAMIESON (*breaking the silence*). My sister-in-law, Lady Glenmire, is coming to stay with me.

ALL (*with interest*). Indeed.

MISS BARKER (*to PEGGY, who is standing open-mouthed at this intelligence*). That will do, Peggy, you may go now.

PEGGY makes a reluctant exit.

MRS JAMIESON. Yes, she is coming next Tuesday.

MISS BARKER. Indeed, indeed, Mrs Jamieson. That is very gratifying news. I am sure that Cranford will be honoured by her visit.

Enter PEGGY.

PEGGY. If you please, here's Mrs Jamieson's sedan come to the door, mum.

(MRS JAMIESON rises heavily.)

MRS JAMIESON. Pray do not allow my withdrawal to break up this pleasant party. Good evening, ladies. Come along, Carlo.

MISS BARKER. Permit me to accompany you to my humble lobby, madam. After you, madam, after you.

Exeunt MRS JAMIESON and MISS BARKER, followed by PEGGY.

MRS FORRESTER. Who is this Lady Glenmire ?

MISS MATTY. She's the widow of Mr Jamieson, that's Mrs Jamieson's late husband, you know—widow of his eldest brother.

MISS POLE. You will all think me strangely ignorant, but, do you know, I am quite puzzled to know how we ought to address Lady Glenmire ? Do you say "Your ladyship" where you would say "you" to a common person, and are we to say "My lady" instead of "Ma'am" ?

MISS MATTY (*taking off her glasses and rubbing them, and then, with a puzzled expression on her face, putting*

them on again). "My lady"—"Your ladyship." It sounds strange and as if it was not natural. I never thought of it before, but now you have named it I am all in a puzzle. What do you say, Mrs Forrester ?

(MRS FORRESTER *shakes her head vigorously.*)

MISS POLE. We must certainly find out, for it would never do to have Lady Glenmire think we were quite ignorant of the etiquette of high life in Cranford.

(*They all repeat "My lady— Your ladyship" to themselves as Miss Barker re-enters.*)

MRS FORRESTER (*rising*). Miss Barker, I fear I must be going.

(*The others also rise.*)

MISS BARKER. Oh, but, ladies, I beg none of you will think of such a thing. I beg at least you will honour me with just one little game of preference.

MRS FORRESTER. Well, it must be only one.

(*They all resume their seats at the card table, and Miss Pole deals.*)

MISS BARKER (*aside as she, too, takes her seat at table*). This has indeed been a gratifying evening. I only wish my poor sister had been alive to see it.

(THEY TAKE UP THEIR HANDS AND BEGIN TO PLAY WITH GREAT INTEREST AS THE CURTAIN FALLS.)

“COLD PUNCH”

CHARLES DICKENS (*Pickwick*)

CHARACTERS

MR PICKWICK
MR WINKLE }
MR TUPMAN } of the *Pickwick Club*.

MR WARDLE

MR TRUNDE

CAPTAIN BOLDWIG, *a stout, fierce, little man.*

HUNT, *his gardener.*

SAMUEL WELLER.

A GAMEKEEPER, *a tall, mournful-looking man with very long legs.*

A LEATHER-LEGGINGED BOY.

PERIOD . . . 1827.

SCENE.—*An open glade in the early autumn. There is a fine oak tree R., and a grassy bank upon which are placed some baskets which contain luncheon. Before the curtain rises there is a sound of gun-firing, and when the curtain goes up MR WARDLE and MR TRUNDE are discovered in the act of shooting partridges.*

WARDLE (*handing his gun to the long-legged KEEPER who is standing by his side*). Capital, capital, we are

going to have a fine day's sport, I'm sure. Aha, Trundle, my boy, see here !

Enter a boy carrying a number of birds which, with the aid of the long-legged KEEPER, he deposits in one of two capacious bags which are lying upon the grass.

MR TRUNDLE. What time did you tell Mr Pickwick and his friends to meet us, sir ?

MR WARDLE. Side of One Tree Hill at 12 o'clock. (*He pulls out a large watch.*) It's that now. (*To KEEPER.*) This is the place, isn't it ?

KEEPER. Yes, sir, but you know, sir, you've only got permission to shoot over Sir Geoffrey's land, sir.

MR WARDLE. Well, what of it ?

KEEPER. Well, you see, sir, this ain't exac'ly Sir Geoffrey's land. It very nearly is, but it ain't quite. That's where Sir Geoffrey's bit stops, sir (*he points off*), where them beaters and the dogs are, but this 'ere belongs to Captain Boldwig, sir, and he ain't a very pleasant gen'leman, the Captain ain't, sir.

MR WARDLE. Well, well, it can't be helped now, and he'll be none the wiser. We can't move all these things again, and besides it's a fine piece of turf to have lunch on.

KEEPER (*touching his hat*). Very good, sir.

(*There is a sound heard of approaching voices.*)

TRUNDLE. Here come our friends.

WARDLE. So they are, so they are. Hola, there, hola.

Enter MR WINKLE and MR TUPMAN. They are both attired in shooting suits and carry guns, a fact which obviously causes them considerable embarrassment,

especially on the part of MR WINKLE, who handles his gun in a manner which is a constant source of danger to those behind him. They are followed immediately by MR PICKWICK, who is seated in a wheelbarrow, which is being pushed along by SAM WELLER.

MR WARDLE. Hullo, Pickwick, old fellow, what the deuce are you in that thing for ?

MR PICKWICK. One minute, Wardle. Winkle, I won't suffer this barrow to be moved another yard till you carry your gun in a different manner.

(*MR WINKLE thus admonished abruptly alters his gun's position, and contrives to bring the barrel into sharp contact with SAM WELLER's hat, which falls off.*)

SAM (*picking up and replacing his hat on his head*). Hullo, sir, if you comes it in this vay, you'll be makin' cold meat o' some of us.

MR WINKLE (*despairingly*). Well, how am I to carry it ?

MR PICKWICK. Carry it with the muzzle to the ground.

MR WINKLE. But it's so unsportsmanlike.

MR PICKWICK. I don't care whether it's unsportsmanlike or not, but I'm not going to be shot in a wheelbarrow for the sake of appearances, to please anybody.

MR WINKLE. Well, well, I don't mind. (*He reverses arms.*)

MR WARDLE. But, Pickwick, old fellow, what are you in that barrow for.

SAM. Vell, you see, sir, it vos this vay, sir. The governor, 'e——

MR PICKWICK. Sam !

SAM. Sir !

MR PICKWICK. That will do, Sam.

SAM. Wery good, sir.

(*He winks at the leather-legginged Boy, who gives a sudden hearty laugh and then pulls himself up very short as he perceives the eye of the long-legged KEEPER is upon him, and tries to look as if the sound came from anybody but him.*)

MR PICKWICK. Unfortunately, Wardle, an attack of rheumatism has rendered me lame for the moment, so Sam here suggested my coming in this wheelbarrow, and as it was a question of adopting his suggestion or of remaining behind, I decided to act upon it, and here I am.

MR WARDLE (*heartily*). Bravo, old fellow, and it does you credit.

KEEPER (*aside to Boy*). Disgustin', I calls it. Who ever 'eard of a shootin' party in a barrer?

MR TRUNDLE (*who has been talking to MR TUPMAN*). We're delighted to see you here in anything, sir.

MR WINKLE (*who has been examining the two capacious bags with interest*). I say, you don't suppose we're going to kill enough game to fill those bags, do you?

MR WARDLE. Bless you, yes. You shall fill one (*MR WINKLE looks aghast*), and I the other, and when we've done with them the pockets of our jackets will hold as much more. But now, then, to work. (*To Boy*). Be off with you, my lad, and warn the other beaters. You take the right, Trundle. Winkle and I will stay here, and, Tupman, you take the left.

Exeunt BOY and MR TRUNDLE R., and MR TUPMAN L.

(*MR WARDLE loads his gun while the KEEPER does the same to that of MR WINKLE, who receives it in evident apprehension of the future consequences.*)

MR WINKLE (*gazing about in a dazed fashion and then*

fixing his eyes upon some object of great interest off stage).
Look at those dogs—what's the matter with their legs ?

MR WARDLE. Hush, can't you—don't you see they are making a point ?

MR WINKLE. Making a point ! What are they pointing at ?

MR WARDLE. Keep your eyes open. Now then——

(*He raises his gun to his shoulder and takes careful aim and then fires, while MR WINKLE, surprised by the report, starts back as if he had been shot himself.*)

MR WINKLE (*recovering himself*). Where are they ? Where are they ?

MR WARDLE (*as the Boy enters carrying a brace of partridges*). Where are they ? Why, here they are.

MR WINKLE (*in great excitement*). No, no, I mean the others.

MR WARDLE (*laughing and re-loading*). Oh, far enough off by this time.

KEEPER. If the gentleman begins to fire now, per'aps he'll just get the shot out o' the barrel by the time the next covey comes over.

(SAM bursts into a roar of laughter.)

MR PICKWICK. Sam !

SAM. Sir !

MR PICKWICK. Don't laugh.

SAM. Cert'nly not, sir. (*He instantly assumes an impenetrable solemnity of countenance.*)

Enter MR TUPMAN.

MR WARDLE. Well, old fellow, you fired that time anyway.

MR TUPMAN (*with conscious pride*). Oh yes—I let it

off, but I had no idea that small firearms kicked so. It nearly knocked me backward. (*He rubs his shoulder ruefully, and hands his gun to KEEPERS.*)

MR WARDLE. Ah, you'll soon get used to that, you know. Now, then, all ready now?

(KEEPER *hands* MR TUPMAN *his gun again, re-loaded.*)

Exit Boy.

MR WARDLE. Now, Winkle, don't be late this time.

MR WINKLE. Never fear. Are they pointing?

MR WARDLE. No, no, not yet. Quiet now.

(MR WINKLE, *greatly impressed, performs some intricate evolutions with his gun, which accidentally goes off as he is in the act of raising it to his shoulder.*)

MR WARDLE. God bless my soul, what on earth did you do that for? You nearly shot the boy.

MR WINKLE. I never saw such a gun in my life. (*He looks down the barrel.*) It seems to go off on its own account.

MR WARDLE. Well, I wish it would kill something on its own account.

KEEPER (*in mournful tones*). It'll do that afore long, sir.

MR WINKLE (*angrily*). What do you mean by that observation?

KEEPER. Nothin', sir, nothin'. I've no family myself, sir, and I daresay Sir Geoffrey'll do something 'andsome for that boy's mother if he's killed on his land, sir. Load again, sir, load again.

MR PICKWICK (*horror struck*). Winkle, you shall do nothing of the kind. Put that gun away, sir.

MR WINKLE (*re-loading rebelliously*). I shall do no such thing, sir.

MR PICKWICK. Somebody take that gun away from him.

MR WARDLE. Hush, hush, the dogs are pointing.

(*There is a short pause, then MR WARDLE takes careful aim and fires. MR WINKLE shoots wildly, while MR TUPMAN shuts his eyes firmly and discharges his gun into the air. Immediately a plump partridge falls almost to his very feet.*)

MR WARDLE. Bravo, Tupman, you singled out that very bird.

MR TUPMAN (*modestly*). No, no.

MR WARDLE. You did. I saw you do it. Aha, Tupman, you are an older hand at this than I thought ; you've been out before.

(*Enter MR TRUNDE, followed by the Boy, who carries a number of birds.*)

MR TRUNDE. Well, what do you say to having lunch before we move on ?

MR WARDLE. A capital notion. Now, then, my boy, put away those birds and unpack the baskets.

MR PICKWICK. Sam !

SAM. Sir !

MR PICKWICK. I'll sit on that bank under the tree.

SAM. Wery good, sir. (*He takes up handles of wheelbarrow.*) Hold on, sir. (*To Boy.*) Now then, out o' the vay, young leather. If you walley your precious life, don't upset me, as the gen'leman said to the driver when they vos carryin' 'im to Tyburn.

(*He wheels MR PICKWICK dexterously across, and helps him*

to alight and to take his seat upon the grass, and then turns to assist the KEEPER and the BOY, who are unpacking the luncheon baskets. MESSRS TRUNDLE, TUPMAN, and WINKLE stroll off L.)

MR WARDLE. Hurry up, there, hurry up. We are all ready.

SAM (*taking up a veal pie and holding it up for MR PICKWICK's inspection*). This 'ere's a weal pie, sir.

MR PICKWICK. So I see, Sam.

SAM. And a wery good thing, too, is a weal pie, when you know the lady as made it, and is quite sure it ain't kittens, though, arter all, where's the odds, when they're so like weal that the wery piemen themselves don't know the difference ?

MR PICKWICK. Don't they, Sam ?

SAM. Not they, sir. I lodged with a pieman once, sir, so I knows, sir. 'E was a very nice man, sir, but 'e could make pies outer anythin'.

SAM (*taking out more comestibles*). 'Ere we 'ave tongue. Wery good when it ain't a woman's. Bread, knuckle o' ham—reg'ler picter—cold beef in slices—wery good. (*To Boy.*) What's in them stone jars, young small checks ?

BOY. Beer in this one and cold punch in t'other.

MR PICKWICK (*with great interest*). A capital lad that. Sam, remind me to give him a shilling this evening.

SAM. Wery good, sir. Now, gen'lemen, "fall on," as the English said to the French when they fixed bagginets.

MR WARDLE. Come along, you fellows.

Enter MESSRS TRUNDLE, TUPMAN, and WINKLE. All seat themselves with alacrity round the luncheon baskets.

MR WELLER and the BOY pour out the drinks and make themselves generally useful. The long-legged KEEPER

retires to a short distance and watches the proceedings with a mournful but hungry eye.)

MR PICKWICK (*after a long drink of cold punch and partaking freely of the good things*). This is delightful—thoroughly delightful.

MR WARDLE. So it is, old fellow, so it is. Come, another glass of punch.

MR PICKWICK (*beaming upon the company as MR WARDLE re-fills his glass*). With great pleasure. Come, I'll give you a toast. Our friends at Dingley Dell. (*This is drunk with great acclamation from MESSRS TUPMAN and WINKLE.*)

MR WARDLE. And I drink to you, old fellow. (*He does so.*) I tell you what. You all have got to come down at Christmas. We're going to have a wedding.

Mr WINKLE. A wedding!

MR WARDLE. Yes, a wedding; but don't be frightened. It's only our friend Trundle here and Bella.

MR WINKLE. Oh! (*To MR TRUNDLE.*) I drink to your happiness, sir.

MR PICKWICK (*beaming upon MR TRUNDLE*). And so do I, my boy, and so do we all, I'm sure.

(*They all regale themselves merrily.*)

MR TRUNDLE. Thank you, thank you very much.

MR WINKLE (*eating bread and ham with his pocket knife*). I'll tell you what I shall do to get up my shooting again. I'll put a stuffed partridge on the top of a post, and practise at it, beginning at a short distance, lengthening it by degrees. I understand it's capital practice.

SAM. I know a gen'leman as tried that, sir, and begun at two yards, but he never tried it on agin, sir, for he blow

the bird right clean away at the first fire, and nobody ever seed a feather on him arterwards.

MR PICKWICK. Sam !

SAM. Sir !

MR PICKWICK. Have the goodness to reserve your anecdotes till they are called for.

SAM. Cert'ly, sir.

MR WARDLE. Come, come, these good fellows of ours must be getting hungry. Help yourselves and take it over there, and we'll join you with the guns before long.

(SAM, the KEEPER, and the BOY take up bread, pies, the beer can, etc.)

SAM. Now, steady there with that there precious liquid, young touch-and-go. Don't you go a-spillin' none.

Exeunt.

MR PICKWICK (*who is becoming more and more benignant*). This is certainly most capital cold punch, and the day is extremely warm. (*He regards his empty glass.*) Tupman, my dear friend, another glass with you.

MR TUPMAN. With all my heart. (*They drink.*)

MR PICKWICK (*rising unsteadily to his feet and beaming upon the company, who by this time have all become extremely merry*). I remember a little song I used to sing as a child. Would you like me to try and sing it ? (*They all roar their approval.*) Well, give me another glass, and I will. It goes something like this. (*He makes several abortive attempts to start, having considerable difficulty over his articulation, then gets as far as " Up and down the City Road, in and out the——".*) No, no, that's wrong—I know, let's all sing it.

(*They all burst into song as MR PICKWICK subsides into*

his wheelbarrow, which is partly hidden behind tree, where he is shortly fast asleep.)

MR WARDLE (*jovially, at the end of song*). Well, well, we must be getting along again now.

MR WINKLE (*seizing his gun*). I'm ready for anything

MR TRUNDLE (*perceiving MR PICKWICK*). Hullo, look here.

MR WARDLE. What shall we do with him ? It seems a pity to wake him.

MR TUPMAN. Why not leave him here and call for him and the baskets together on our way home ?

MR WARDLE. That's the plan. Come along, Tupman.

Exeunt MESSRS WARDLE and TUPMAN. MR WINKLE seizes MR TRUNDLE by the arm and bursts once more into “Up and down the City Road,” using his gun as a baton, and they follow the others off. There is a few moments' complete silence, broken only by the snores of MR PICKWICK, and afterwards by the discharge of the guns in the distance, which gradually become fainter and fainter till at length they die away altogether, and there is complete silence, even MR PICKWICK's snores having ceased. Enter CAPTAIN BOLDWIG and HUNT. CAPTAIN BOLDWIG perceives neither MR PICKWICK nor the remains of the feast. He struts around the stage, stopping in the middle to survey the landscape with a proprietorial air.

CAPT. BOLDWIG. Hunt !

HUNT. Yes, sir.

CAPT. BOLDWIG. See this place is rolled to-morrow morning—do you hear, Hunt ?

HUNT. Yes, sir.

CAPT. BOLDWIG. And remind me to have a board done about trespassers and spring guns, and all that sort

of thing, to keep the common people out. Do you hear, Hunt, do you hear ?

(HUNT does not reply, as he has suddenly caught sight of the luncheon remains.)

CAPT. BOLDWIG (*angrily*). Do you hear me, Hunt ?

HUNT. Beg pardon, sir, but I think there have been trespassers here to-day.

CAPT. BOLDWIG (*wheeling round*). Ha ! What's that ?

HUNT. Yes, sir—they've been dining here, sir, I think.

CAPT. BOLDWIG (*fiercely shaking his stick*). Why, damn their audacity, so they have. They have actually been devouring their food here. I wish I had the vagabonds here—I'd—— Why, what the devil's this ? (He catches sight of MR PICKWICK's reclining form.)

HUNT. It's one o' them diners, I think, sir.

CAPT. BOLDWIG. Bring him here. Do you hear me ? Bring the rascal here, I say.

(HUNT pushes the barrow forward.)

CAPT. BOLDWIG (*prodding Mr Pickwick in the ribs with his stick*). Who are you, you vagabond ? What's your name ?

MR PICKWICK (*in a gentle murmur*). Cold punch. (He sinks once more into a deep slumber.)

CAPT. BOLDWIG. What did the rascal say his name was ?

HUNT. I think he said it was Punch, sir.

CAPT. BOLDWIG (*with growing ferocity*). Punch ! That's his confounded impudence. He's only feigning to be asleep. He's drunk ; he's a drunken plebeian. Wheel him away, Hunt, wheel him away.

HUNT. Where shall wheel him to, sir ?

CAPT. BOLDWIG (*explosively*). Wheel him to the devil.

HUNT (*taking up the handles of the barrow*). Very well, sir.

CAPT. BOLDWIG. Stop. Wheel him to the pound. We'll see if he calls himself Punch when he comes to himself. He shall not bully me. Away with the rascal. To the pound with him—off with him to the pound.

(HUNT begins to wheel away the barrow. As he passes

CAPTAIN BOLDWIG, MR PICKWICK raises his head unsteadily and again murmurs "Cold punch," then sinks down again as the barrow is wheeled off the stage, leaving the CAPTAIN furiously brandishing his stick.)

CURTAIN.

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